

Department for Work and Pensions

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Pakistani and Bangladeshi women's attitudes to work and family

Jane Aston, Hülya Hooker, Rosie Page and Rebecca Willison

A report of research carried out by the Institute for Employment Studies on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions

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Summary

Background

This research arose from a previous Institute for Employment Studies (IES) study for the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), entitled 'Barriers to Employment for Pakistanis and Bangladeshis in Great Britain'¹. This second project followed up some of the women respondents from the first study, and also recruited new women to the research. The purpose of this study was to further explore Pakistani and Bangladeshi women's attitudes towards education, employment, and how their views around family, marriage and children fit with and shape these.

Method

The research was qualitative, and consisted of 60 in-depth interviews with women. Twenty-two of the women had taken part in the first study, and 38 were newly recruited for this research. They lived in a number of major cities across Great Britain. Forty women were Pakistani and 20 were Bangladeshi; they were aged between 16 and 59; and in terms of migrational background, they included women of first, second and third generation in the UK. There was a fairly even split between those in employment and those who were not; those who were married and those who were not; and those with and without children.

Attitudes towards the family and home

Chapter 3 of the main report looks at women's views and experiences of marriage; of having and caring for children; their attitudes towards other caring responsibilities and domestic responsibilities; and leisure time and socialising.

¹ Tackey, N., Casebourne, J., Aston, J., Ritchie, H., Sinclair, A., Tyers, C., Hurstfield, J., Willison, R., and Page, R. (2006) Barriers to Employment for Pakistanis and Bangladeshis in Britain, DWP Research Report No. 360.

Marriage

- There was an assumption amongst all women that they would get married; those who were married said they had always expected this, and those who were not yet married said that they would get married in the future. There were no examples of cohabitation amongst the 60 women interviewed.
- Single respondents typically thought that they would marry during their 20s, and some women said that they would like to wait until they had completed studies or spent some time in employment before they got married. Some reported pressure from older generations to marry earlier in their 20s, but some felt that this pressure was lessening.
- Some respondents reported having arranged marriages, while others had married partners who had been approved by their parents. Similarly, there were mixed views from the women who were not yet married on whether their own marriages would be arranged or just approved by their parents. Marrying within the same religion was seen to be of the utmost importance, and to a lesser extent, it was felt to be important to marry someone with a similar background and culture.
- Those women who were already working in the UK prior to their marriage often continued in their jobs after they were married; in these cases it was having children rather than marriage itself which would make women want to stop or scale down their work outside the home. Some women had come from abroad to marry and settle down in the UK, and they had rarely worked immediately following their marriage; partly due to a lack of English language skills, unfamiliarity with the new country, and sometimes also their own and their husbands' and families' beliefs that men should be the breadwinners.
- A small number of women were divorced or separated, despite their high commitment to making their marriages work. The decision to separate had often been a long and painful one, and several women were left traumatised and depressed as a result of their experiences. Several reported considerable stigma around separation and divorce in their communities.

Children

- As with marriage, there was an almost universal belief amongst the women interviewed that they would have children; with women who were already mothers reporting that they had always wanted children, and those without children assuming that they would have them after they were married.
- Younger women without children usually said they wanted two or three children; they said they would rather have fewer children than had been the case in older generations as it gave them more time to devote to each child, and greater scope to provide for them financially. Most women said they had, or would have, children in their 20s. Some of the younger women hoped to have established themselves in their careers before they had children. They reported that there was some pressure from older generations to have children soon after marriage, but that this was lessening.

- Most women said that they did not want to work or study when their children were very young, so they could devote their attention to their children and family. Those who wanted to return to work after having children usually wanted to work part-time. A few women had needed to work when they had young children, due to financial necessity.
- Many women wanted to look after their children themselves, with the help of their families. Informal childcare from the extended family was common, but use of formal childcare was relatively rare. Many women felt that husbands were now taking an active part in looking after their children.
- Some women were clear that they would not want to use formal childcare, but some of the younger women pointed out the socialisation and developmental benefits that formal childcare could have. Cost of childcare was seen as a potential barrier by some women, particularly those who would probably be limited initially to relatively low paid work as a result of their skills and experience.

Caring and domestic responsibilities

- Women of all ages and educational background believed that they would be at least partly responsible for an elderly or ill family member. These responsibilities often had a substantial impact on women's lives, including their educational achievements and subsequent employment options.
- Many women, particularly those with higher qualification levels, said that they shared domestic responsibilities with their husbands, while others, particularly those who did not work, held more traditional views of women as homemakers.

Socialising

- There were mixed views on leisure and socialising, with some women having apparently little freedom to do this outside their home and family, while others were able to socialise with friends in an open way. There was a feeling that this was changing as younger generations had different expectations, and were allowed increasing amounts of freedom.

Education and work

Chapter 4 in the main report explores women's attitudes towards education and work, looking at the respondents' education histories and qualifications; their experiences of, and attitudes towards, employment; the perceived barriers to employment; and their career aspirations.

Education

- Most of the women interviewed valued education very highly, regardless of their age, education, migrational background or generation. Those with few or no qualifications often spoke of wanting their daughters to have a good education. However, some women felt that some men in their communities did not support women's educational aspirations, as it could give women too much independence and power.
- The influence of family circumstances and parents' or partners' attitudes was strong. Some of the women had no qualifications, and had bad experiences at school or had very traditional parents who had not felt that education for women was important. It was generally felt that these attitudes were changing and many of the younger women interviewed had obtained qualifications up to and including degrees.
- Women with degrees and masters degrees often said that their parents had passionately encouraged them in their education. This was very much the case for women who had obtained their degrees in their home country, whose parents were often also well educated. In contrast, some of the women who had obtained degrees in the UK said that their parents had wanted them to have an education and career that they themselves had not had the chance of.

Employment

- Around half the women interviewed were in paid employment. Those with no or few qualifications and/or with limited English language, were the most often unemployed or economically inactive. A few women reported doing voluntary work, sometimes in community centres that catered especially for Asian women.
- Women with qualifications, particularly those with degrees, were usually in employment, and some held relatively senior positions. Those with qualifications below degree level held a range of posts including working for local authorities, in the health sector, in call centres, or for financial institutions. Some women worked in social care settings, and others worked with children in nurseries or as classroom assistants. A number of women worked in jobs which involved working with and supporting women and families in their community.
- A small number of women reported being the main breadwinner in their family, but most women in paid employment considered that there was a joint responsibility between husband and wife to earn money.
- Regardless of educational background, the employed women interviewed for this study said that they had made a conscious effort to fit their work around their childcare responsibilities. They often worked part-time, or in jobs which offered them the flexibility they needed to do this. Some had chosen their jobs and careers for this purpose, or worked in roles for which they were over-qualified, in order to be able to balance the demands of work and family.

Aspirations

- When asked to name a role model, women often chose their own mother or another woman from their family, and spoke of the importance of the role of women as mothers. A few women mentioned women in their families who had been able to combine family and work.
- Younger women's career aspirations included working with their community, and teaching or working with children; hence, while some women had begun to break with the traditional role of women in the home, the employment aspirations of many taking part in this research were in line with typical 'female' careers.
- Women's aspirations for their daughters generally revolved around their having a good education which would, in turn, give them some control over their future.

Barriers to, and benefits of, employment

- Language barriers and poor health were the key barriers mentioned by women in terms of accessing employment. Discrimination was mentioned by some of the younger women regarding difficulties they had experienced when trying to enter particular careers, or in terms of feeling uncomfortable working in particular sectors or working environments.
- Women felt that the benefits of employment included having some financial independence, having more control over their lives, being able to contribute to their families' finances, and that earning money of their own meant that they did not feel guilty about spending money on themselves. They also spoke of work giving them access to a social life outside their home, and of the potential benefits to health, self-esteem and confidence.

Conclusions

- The women interviewed for this research cannot be assumed to be representative of their communities as a whole, but they do demonstrate considerable diversity in terms of their backgrounds, education, aspirations and career paths. Marriage and children were the only constant themes which ran through virtually all these women's lives.
- Women generally felt that the influence of generational and migrational background on attitudes and expectations was strong, with younger women and second and third generation women holding less traditional views than their older relatives, in terms of education and employment. It was also becoming more acceptable to marry later and have children later than had been the norm in the past.
- Women felt that living according to their religion (usually Islam) and preserving their culture was very important. Several pointed out that having a good education and career was very compatible with this, and that contrary to the beliefs of some, Islam promoted equality between men and women.

- Family was viewed as the most important thing in women's lives by most of the women in the research. Employment was seen as important as well, but it was usually felt that family should come first, whether this was to care for children, or elderly or infirm family members.
- Marriage and children was an automatic assumption for virtually all of the women interviewed. Marrying within the same religion was felt to be vitally important. Arranged marriages were common, but so too were marriages of which parents approved of but had not arranged and there was generally felt to be more choice around who and when to marry than there had been in the past.
- The role of a mother was felt to be desirable, important and influential. However, the size of families was felt to be shrinking. There was a strong desire to break from work after having children to look after them while they were young, perhaps returning to the labour market when the youngest child was of school age.
- Education was valued very highly, regardless of women's own levels of education and background. The influence and support of family in women's education was clear and profound.
- There appeared to be a strong link between women's levels of education and qualifications, and their engagement in the labour market. Scarcely any of the women without qualifications, or those without good English language skills, were employed.
- There was a wide range of jobs being done by women in the study, although there often appeared to be a preference for public or voluntary sector employers. There was also some evidence of stereotypical 'female' career aspirations amongst the younger women.
- The importance of flexibility at work was highlighted by a number of women as being key in enabling them to juggle their family and working lives. Some women said that they would not work at all once they had children if they were not able to work part-time hours which fitted around caring for their children.

Policy implications

- Education is key. The importance of education in raising women's aspirations and expectations in both the home and in the labour market should be recognised.
- Assist women who have had children to return to the labour market. Ways to keep contact with, or re-engage women returners from these communities need to be found.
- Ensuring flexible employment opportunities that are sensitive to constraints will assist Pakistani and Bangladeshi women to combine work and family.

- Provide appropriate childcare. Ensuring the provision of culturally sensitive childcare, organised in a way that is deemed appropriate by mothers from these communities, will provide women with more choice.
- Engage the hardest to reach groups. Offer long-term unemployed or economically inactive women targeted intervention and support in a non-threatening environment within their own community.

1 Introduction

This chapter presents:

- the background to the research, including the previous research undertaken by the Institute for Employment Studies (IES) which led to this current study
- some of the key literature
- a brief history of Pakistani and Bangladeshi migration to the UK
- the methodology.

1.1 Background to the research

This section outlines the background to the research. It arose from the key findings from an earlier study undertaken by IES for the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), which resulted in the publication 'Barriers to Employment for Pakistanis and Bangladeshis in Britain'. This study, 'Pakistani and Bangladeshi women's attitudes to work and family' aimed to follow up some of the original respondents, and to further explore the key findings pertaining to women which emerged from the first study.

1.1.1 The 'Barriers to employment for Pakistanis and Bangladeshis in Britain' study by IES

In 2004, DWP commissioned IES to undertake research on the barriers to employment for Pakistani and Bangladeshi job seekers. The central aim of the research was to explore the experiences and perspectives of Pakistanis and Bangladeshis, using a qualitative research approach supplemented by a literature review, an employer survey and a labour market analysis. Much of the research was focused around five areas: Birmingham, Bristol, Bradford, Glasgow and Tower Hamlets in London. The resulting report on all strands of the research was published in 2006.² The

² Tackey, N., Casebourne, J., Aston, J., Ritchie, H., Sinclair, A., Tyers, C., Hurstfield, J., Willison, R., and Page, R. (2006) Barriers to employment for Pakistanis and Bangladeshis in Britain, DWP Research Report No. 360.

qualitative research with Pakistani and Bangladeshi individuals involved interviews with 98 women and 133 men, most of whom were unemployed or economically inactive.

Some of the key findings from the research concerned Pakistani and Bangladeshi women, their life choices and responsibilities around caring for their family and their children, and how these affected their aspirations and their economic activity, including:

- educational achievement and career aspirations;
- childcare and other caring responsibilities;
- women's aspirations;
- use of formal childcare;
- combining part-time work with family responsibilities;
- younger women's attitudes;
- the effect of culture and religion;
- English language proficiency;
- lack of work experience.

The most significant barriers for Pakistani and Bangladeshi women who took part in the individual interviews related to childcare and other caring responsibilities. Whilst many women were positive about working before they had children, once they had children they wanted to be good mothers and do what their family and community expected, which often meant staying at home to look after their children. In addition, women tended to have relatively large numbers of children and, as a result, were out of the labour market for long periods. Extended family arrangements could also mean that women had wider responsibilities than caring for their children and husband only. There were strong expectations that women would look after the home and family rather than work; many men and women took this pattern for granted. Some Pakistani and Bangladeshi men did not encourage their first generation wives to learn English as it provided a freedom they would prefer their wives did not have.

Turning to issues of childcare, most women were reluctant to consider using childcare arrangements outside their family, especially when their children were small. Women often reported that they would not feel able to trust a professional child carer with their children. However, once all their children had reached school age, some women felt that they would like to look for part-time work which they would be able to do while their children were at school. There were few lone parents who took part in the previous research, but amongst these there was a reluctance to rely on formal childcare, or childcare that was not deemed to be culturally suitable. The potential to be financially worse off in work than on benefits was also mentioned.

There was evidence of shifts occurring in attitudes towards Pakistani and Bangladeshi women working outside the home. Young women, particularly Bangladeshi women, were positive about working outside the home in order to be financially independent. Family role models seemed to be important in fostering this attitude. The change in attitudes towards women working appeared to be slower amongst Pakistanis, where parental and community attitudes were stricter and less accommodating towards women working. It was not clear whether this was primarily as a result of culture or religion. Parental aspirations could also affect young women's choices, with certain careers deemed unsuitable. Community expectations of women was felt to be determined by culture rather than religion, with the influence of male community elders being considerable and powerful in maintaining the status quo. However, women mentioned more often than men the restrictions that their religion (Islam) placed on where they were able to work; citing, for example, places where alcohol was served, gambling establishments, and places where they could not observe Hijab (covering of the head and body).

Some women wanted to work to liberate themselves from the traditional patterns of depending financially on their husbands. They also differed from men in that they more readily considered strategies to get into employment such as learning English or undertaking training. Language did emerge as a significant barrier, but in general, language barriers were less marked for women than men, and women appeared to be keener than men to take ESOL courses and improve their English. Women also tended to aspire to jobs with career prospects, and by contrast, men wanted to go back to the unskilled jobs they had done in the past. Lack of experience was found to be a barrier to employment for women, particularly if they had been out of the labour market for extended periods while bringing up their children.

1.2 Key themes in the literature

Results from the Fourth National Survey of Ethnic Minorities (Modood *et al.*, 1997a) showed that Pakistani and Bangladeshi women consistently had the lowest levels of participation in the labour market. Over 80 per cent of Bangladeshi women and 70 per cent of Pakistani women of working age and not in full-time education were looking after the home and family as their main activity, compared to around 25 per cent of other ethnic groups including white women. It is known that Pakistani and Bangladeshi women start families earlier and are more likely than white women to have children in their 20s (Modood *et al.*, 1997b). The young women's attitudes to child-rearing and childcare may, therefore, influence not only their decision of whether or not to re-enter employment after the birth of children, but also their expectation of work and their job/career prospects. In addition, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis have larger families compared with the rest of the population.

Pakistani and Bangladeshi women therefore display very different life stage patterns to women in other ethnic groups, in terms of economic activity. This

is most striking amongst women with young children, with just 23 per cent of Pakistani women and ten per cent of Bangladeshi women being economically active (Lindley *et al.*, 2003). This is a positive choice for many women, who strongly believe that parenting should take precedence over personal career aspirations. The view is not restricted to older generations, and a study by Dale *et al.* (2002) found that the vast majority of young Pakistani and Bangladeshi women plan to get married, have children and care for them at home; and they hold this view irrespective of their education and qualifications.

However, the literature reveals that attitudes to work amongst Pakistani and Bangladeshi women are not clear cut, and that factors including age, education, marital status and English language proficiency can all come into play. Hence, there have been studies which found that many Pakistani and Bangladeshi women felt that paid work was important for women, in addition to their family aspirations and responsibilities, contributing to self-worth, well-being and identity. Education appears to be key in giving women not only better job prospects, but in equipping them with more confidence and motivation to argue against the traditional view. Younger single women brought up in the UK have been found to be more likely to work outside the home, and many hoped to find ways of combining work and child-rearing after marriage (Dale *et al.*, 2002). A need for culturally sensitive childcare was found by Hall *et al.* (2004) with mothers becoming increasingly concerned that their children would be bullied following increased Islamophobia after 11 September 2001. They generally preferred informal childcare from family members and close friends.

Recent research by Bell *et al.* (2005) on the use of childcare among families from minority ethnic backgrounds supported many of the findings from earlier literature. It found that Pakistani and Bangladeshi parents were younger than the parents in other ethnic groups, and were less likely to be in any form of employment. They were least likely to have recently used formal childcare and more likely to live in households with high numbers of additional adults (who were able to take on some of the childcare duties). The patterns already observed, for women to prioritise family responsibilities, were also found here; 96 per cent of Pakistani non-working mothers reported that their primary activity was looking after the home and family (their Bangladeshi equivalent in this study were too few in number to be reported). Furthermore, Pakistani and Bangladeshi women were most likely to carry the full responsibility for looking after their children. Fifty-three per cent of Bangladeshis, and 43 per cent of Pakistanis had used no childcare (formal or informal) in the past year; higher levels than reported from any of the other ethnic groups. Asian parents were more likely than other groups to say that they would like information on the quality of childcare in the local area, indicating that concerns about quality may form a barrier for this group. They were also most likely to say that they had not received any information about childcare, but also that they had enough information, reflecting a lower demand for formal childcare from Asian parents.

For some young women, there is still a strong family pressure to marry rather than pursue education or employment, in order to prevent their being 'corrupted' by Western influences (Ahmad *et al.*, 2003). In addition, since many women move into the home of their husbands on getting married, their parents-in-law can exert considerable pressure on them to conform to a traditional role, rather than participating in the labour market (Dale *et al.*, 2002).

The literature also reveals that Pakistanis and Bangladeshis are disproportionately affected by ill-health and illness compared to the population as a whole. The impact of this is wide reaching, affecting not only the individual's ability to work, but the wider family through caring needs and reduced income. The burden of caring responsibilities in these communities is usually carried by women rather than men, which reduces their ability to participate in the labour market. There are often financial disincentives to work in such circumstances, and as a result, women can have a lack of confidence as a result of long periods of time away from the labour market (Howard, 2002). The migration pattern of Bangladeshis in particular mean that there has tended to be an age gap between early migrant men and their wives, so that at present, many middle aged Bangladeshi women are caring for their much older and/or sick husbands, as well as for children of a wide range of ages (Phillipson *et al.*, 2003). This research also found that some South Asian mothers felt that given their childcare and domestic responsibilities, they did not have time for paid employment.

1.3 A brief history of Pakistani and Bangladeshi migration to the UK

This is an abridged version of a literature review section which appeared in the original 'Barriers to Employment' study (Tackey *et al.*, 2006).

Large-scale, sustained migration from south Asia has been a post-war phenomenon. Pakistani migration, from West Pakistan and especially Mirpur, started in the late 1950s and peaked in 1961. Until 1962, Pakistanis could enter Britain without restriction as British subjects under the 1948 British Nationality Act. The 1962 Commonwealth Immigrations Act barred free entry of new workers from the British Commonwealth, although it permitted family reunion. The threat of forthcoming controls accelerated the process of migration, with the numbers of migrants from Pakistan greatly increasing in the 18 months prior to the passing of the Act. The 1962 restrictions had the effect of reinforcing existing patterns of emigration, with a person's migration depending on prior contacts in Britain.

Bangladeshi immigration to Britain is more recent than the bulk of Pakistani immigration. Although primary immigration had taken place during the 1960s, it accelerated in the 1970s after the secession of East Pakistan into the new state of Bangladesh in 1971. The vast majority of Bangladeshi migrants to Britain came from the Sylhet District. Uniquely in the region, farmers in Sylhet were owner-cultivators, rather than just tenants, and were accustomed to autonomy and

financial independence. When opportunities for overseas migration arose they were in the best position to raise the capital outlay for their fares. Like migrants from Pakistan, the main motivation initially was to take advantage of higher wages in Britain and remit money back to their home countries for investment in land and housing. Whilst most of the Sylheti migrants were small owner-cultivators in their homelands, there was also considerable heterogeneity amongst them, in terms of wealth, skills and education. A small minority were from urban centres and more likely to have commercial skills and/or qualifications.

Once Bangladeshis and Pakistanis had settled in Britain, their wives and families joined them. Some families quickly reunited themselves whilst others waited until the 1970s or mid-1980s, when they were in a better and more secure situation. Total immigration for Bangladeshis, therefore, peaked in the 1980s as a result of family reunification. Some British Bangladeshi families have reached their third generation in Britain; others, especially newly married women have only recently arrived. On the whole, Bangladeshi family reunion happened much later than for Pakistani families.

1.3.1 Migration terms used in this report

In this report, women are referred to as first, second or third generation migrants to the UK. Despite the migration of Pakistanis to the UK peaking in 1961, and Bangladeshi migration to the UK peaking in the 1980s, considerable numbers arrived before and after this. Hence, there is sometimes little correlation between generation and age. In this report, the term 'first generation' simply refers to women who were not born in the UK but arrived in the UK as children or adults. Second generation refers to women who were born in the UK but whose parents had migrated to the UK, while third generation women are those whose grandparents had migrated to the UK, while they and their own parents had been born in the UK.

1.4 Methodology

The purpose of this research was to explore, and draw out more fully, the key themes that emerged from the first study with regard to women, work and family. A qualitative methodology was felt to be the most appropriate for this, involving face-to-face interviews with women in their own homes, at their place of work or at another place where they felt comfortable. Qualitative research is ideal for exploring attitudes and behaviours and in particular, allowing deeper insight into why individuals think and behave as they do. However, it is worth noting that qualitative research is not, nor is meant to be, statistically representative. The results of qualitative research are indicative only and therefore should not be extrapolated to the general population.

1.4.1 Sampling and recruitment

In summary, this research comprised 60 interviews with Pakistani and Bangladeshi women, of which:

- 22 were with women from the original sample from the 'Barriers to Employment' study;
- 38 were with women from a new sample generated for this study.

The research was conducted in a number of geographical areas, for the most part adopting the areas used in the first study. The number of interviews carried out in each area for this study is shown in Table 1.1. (Further demographic information on the achieved sample is given in Table 2.1 in Chapter 2 on the respondents' background and characteristics.)

The original sample

One of the aims of this study was to re-interview some of the 98 women interviewed for the 'Barriers to Employment' study, in order to provide some insight into changes over time in their lives, and to further explore their attitudes to work and family. It was planned to interview some of the women from the original sample 18 months after being interviewed for the first study.

Table 1.1 Number of interviews carried out, by ethnicity and area

	Old sample	New sample
Pakistani	14	26
Bangladeshi	8	12
Birmingham	3	
Bradford	6	18
Bristol	2	9
Glasgow	4	
London	7	9
Other areas		2
Total	22	38

All 98 women who took part in the original study were contacted as part of an opt-in process. They were sent a letter in English with an Urdu, Punjabi and Bengali translation available on request. The letter referred to the previous research, and invited them to participate in the follow up study on attitudes to work and family. If they wished to do so, they were asked to complete and return a contact details slip to IES. Twenty-six women returned the opt-in details, and from these, 22 were recruited to the study and interviewed. Women were contacted, usually by telephone or email, to arrange a suitable time and place to meet with an IES interviewer. Where necessary, a recruiter with relevant community languages was used to ensure that all who wished to take part were able to do so.

The new sample

A new sample was required to generate the rest of the 60 interviews needed for this study. The women in the new sample were recruited through a variety of routes. Flyers and postcards were designed to hand out to individuals and to send to community organisations, and these were used to spread the word about the research and to encourage people to put themselves forward. Efforts were concentrated in the areas which were the focus of the first piece of research, ie Bradford, Bristol, Birmingham, London and Glasgow, although the recruitment of women was more successful in some of these areas than others. The methods used to recruit women to the study included:

- asking the people interviewed to pass postcards and flyers to their friends and relatives;
- leaving flyers and postcards in community venues such as resource and training centres for Asian women;
- attending sessions at community venues to meet with and interview some of the women present;
- placing an advert about the research on a university careers website;
- using other personal and business contacts to identify women to take part in this study.

Where direct contact details were available, women were contacted by telephone or email as above to arrange a suitable time and place to meet with an IES interviewer, and a recruiter with community languages (Bengali or Urdu and Punjabi) was used, where appropriate, to ensure that all who wished to take part were able to do so. In other cases, arrangements were made with a particular community venue who arranged for a number of women who used their centre to be interviewed.

Through a combination of these methods a further 38 women were recruited and interviewed. The aim with this new sample was to ensure that the following were included in the research:

- employed women;
- women with children;
- women at college or university;
- younger women who were not claiming Jobseeker's Allowance.

See Section 2.1 for a breakdown of characteristics of the achieved sample.

1.4.2 Topics covered in the interviews

A semi-structured discussion guide was developed to use in the interviews (the discussion guide is provided in Appendix A), and this covered the following key areas:

- background information (for the new sample only – background information collected during the original study was referred to where appropriate);
- changes in circumstances since the first interview (for the original sample only);
- marriage and having children;
- caring for children and other family members;
- childcare;
- experience of employment;
- attitudes to paid employment;
- career choices and aspirations;
- working in a family business, or self-employment.

Each key theme had a number of questions and prompts to ensure that the topics were covered effectively in the interview. Two additional elements were used in the interviews to help draw out some of the key issues for each woman who participated in the research; these were 'timelines' and a 'daily routine', which are explained below (copies of these are also included in the appendices).

Timeline

The timeline was used near the start of the interview as an ice breaker and to get women used to talking about themselves in an interview situation. The timeline was a large sheet of paper divided into sections, each representing a different age range. Each section was used to represent years of the woman's life, for example, there were sections for ages 0-14, 15-17, 18-19, 20-22 and so on. There were also stickers with important life events on, including, 'starting school', 'leaving school', 'going to college', 'meeting husband', 'getting married', 'spending time in Pakistan/ Bangladesh', 'having first child', 'second child', and 'death of a close family member'. There were some blank stickers so that women could write on any key life events which were not already listed. Each woman was asked to put the stickers in the appropriate places on the timeline, to build up a visual picture of their life history. When they had done this, they were asked:

- what happened and why, in what order, and exactly how old they were;
- about the differences or similarities between what actually happened and what they expected to happen;
- about the differences or similarities between what actually happened and what their parents had expected to happen;
- about the people and events which had influenced their choices.

This approach was very successful in helping the women respondents talk freely about their lives, their families, their education and, if relevant, their employment.

The information collected during the timeline exercise was used as a basis for the rest of the interview. The key themes in the discussion guide were followed up as appropriate, to collect more detail on the issues and events which were most pertinent to each woman, depending on their history and circumstances.

Timelines and stickers were available in English, Urdu, Punjabi and Bengali.

Daily routine

The daily routine exercise was used towards the end of the interview. It was a sheet of paper with a list of tasks or pastimes that women might be expected to spend time doing on a typical day, for example, 'sleeping', 'cooking', 'cleaning', 'looking after children or other family members', 'shopping', 'working', 'working in family business', 'voluntary work', 'travelling', 'socialising', 'studying', and 'leisure time including watching television'. Respondents were given 24 stickers, each representing one hour, and were asked to place the stickers next to the tasks or pastimes, according to how they spent their time on a typical weekday, until all 24 stickers had been used up. This built up a visual picture of how the respondent spent their time on a typical day. Then they were asked:

- how they felt about their daily routine and would they like to be doing more or less of some things;
- how their routine was different from those of their mother or mother-in-law when they were the respondent's age;
- how they thought their daughter's daily routine would be different when they were the respondent's age, and their aspirations for their daughters in terms of education, marriage, and employment.

Daily routines were available in English, Urdu, Punjabi and Bengali.

1.4.3 Conducting and analysing the interviews

The fieldwork for this study took place between August 2006 and February 2007. All interviews were conducted face-to-face, by female interviewers. Interpreters were used when respondents preferred to be interviewed in languages other than English. Interviews were conducted in a variety of different places depending on the women's circumstances and preferences. Some were conducted at women's homes, some at their place of work, and some women were interviewed at community centres or training centres where they attended sessions or classes. The length of the interviews varied from around 45 minutes to an hour and a half.

At the start of the interview, the background and purpose of research was outlined by the interviewer, and it was explained to the women respondents that they were under no obligation to answer questions if they did not feel comfortable doing so. It was also explained that the interviews were confidential and that we would not name or identify anyone in the report, nor would their details be passed on to any other party. We asked permission to record the interviews, and in most cases,

women were happy for us to do this. Occasionally, women preferred us to take notes. All women who took part in the research were given £20 at the end of the interview, to thank them for participating.

The recorded interviews were transcribed, and where notes had been taken instead these were written up. All transcripts and interview notes were coded and analysed using the Atlas.ti qualitative software package. This report is based on that analysis.

1.4.4 Overview of the report structure

Chapter 2 presents the background characteristics of the women who took part in this study. It also looks at the changes in circumstances of the women in the original sample since they were interviewed for the 'Barriers to Employment' study, and provides some contrasting case histories from the women in the new sample.

Chapter 3 discusses the attitudes and experiences of the respondents in their family and home life. It starts by examining the respondents' views on, and experiences of, marriage, before moving on to their views on having and caring for children. The chapter then moves on to consider other caring responsibilities and domestic responsibilities before turning to leisure time and socialising.

Chapter 4 explores education and work, looking first at the education histories and qualifications of the women who were interviewed for this research. It then turns to their experiences of, and attitudes towards, employment, including barriers to employment. Finally, it looks at respondents' career aspirations, and experiences of self-employment.

Chapter 5 presents the conclusions from this research.

2 The respondents

This chapter presents:

- the background characteristics of the women who took part in this study;
- the changes in circumstances of the women in the original sample since they were interviewed for the 'Barriers to Employment' study;
- some contrasting case histories from the women in the new sample.

2.1 Respondents' background and characteristics

This section presents some of the key background characteristics of the women interviewed for this study. The 60 interviews covered women with a wide range of migrational and educational backgrounds, with different life experiences, and who were at different stages in their lives.

Table 2.1 Key characteristics of the respondents

Characteristic	<i>N</i>	Characteristic	<i>N</i>
Pakistani	40	Employed	28
Bangladeshi	20	Not employed	32
Age 16-19	3	Married	36
20-29	31	Not married	24
30-39	12	Have children	32
40-49	6	No children	28
50-59	8		
First generation	32	No qualifications	9
Second generation	26	Qualifications below degree level	36
Third generation	2	Degree	15
Total			60

Table 2.1 shows the key characteristics of the achieved sample of the 60 women who took part in this study, including both the original sample and the new sample. Table 2.2 gives a more detailed breakdown of the whole sample by ethnicity, area and age group.

Table 2.2 Breakdown by ethnicity, area and age group

Pakistani	Teens	20s	30s	40s	50s	Total
Bradford	1	12	8		2	23
London					1	1
Bristol		2	2	2	3	9
Glasgow		2	1	1		4
Birmingham		1		1		2
Other		1				1
Total	1	18	11	4	6	40

Bangladeshi	Teens	20s	30s	40s	50s	Total
Bradford		1				1
London		2	11		2	15
Bristol			1	1		2
Glasgow						
Birmingham		1				1
Other				1		1
Total	2	13	1	2	2	20

The key background characteristics of the women in the sample are listed below:

- Ethnicity: there were more Pakistani women than Bangladeshi women in the respondent sample, as was the case in the original study.
- Age: most of the women were in their 20s or 30s, with smaller numbers in their teens, and aged 40 or more.
- Migrational background: just over half of the women were the first generation of their family to come to the UK; 26 women were second generation, ie they had been born in the UK but their parents had migrated to the UK; and two respondents were third generation, ie their grandparents had migrated to the UK.
- Marital status and children: there was a reasonably even split within the respondents between those who were married and those who were not, those who had children and those who did not.
- Employment status: there was a fairly even split between those who were in employment and those who were not.

- Qualifications: most of the respondents had some qualifications; more than half had qualifications below degree level, 15 had degree level qualifications. Only nine women had no qualifications.
- English language proficiency: 13 of the 60 women interviewed requested an interpreter during the interview as their English language was very limited.

2.1.1 Characteristics of the new sample

Thirty-eight of the 60 women interviewed for this study were recruited specifically for this study, while 22 had also taken part in the original study. These 22 women had originally been sampled through DWP benefits records, whereas the new sample of 38 women were sourced in a variety of ways, with the purpose of recruiting employed women, women with children, women at college or university, and younger women (see Section 1.4.1 for details). As a result, it was notable that the women in the new sample were different from those in the original sample who were reinterviewed for this study, and indeed from the whole sample who were interviewed as part of the original 'Barriers to Employment' research. For example, compared to the original sample, they were often more educated, often younger, more likely to be engaged with, and aware of, the labour market, sometimes in well established careers, and more likely to be juggling work and family. Some of their views and experiences are outlined as case history examples in Section 2.3.

2.2 Change and continuity in women's lives since the last study

This section is based on the original sample only. There were 22 women who took part in the first study who were interviewed again for this study. In addition to finding out more about their attitudes to work and family, these interviews were used to look at their changes in circumstances during the 18 months between the two pieces of research. It was clear that there were many different starting points amongst the women respondents in terms of their education, work experience and family circumstances. This made it difficult to draw out common themes of progression due to the relatively small number of interviews. As a result, their changes in circumstances are presented as a series of case study examples, illustrating the women's different lives and the extent to which they had changed over a period of 18 months. The section first looks at changes in circumstance and then turns to the stories of women whose circumstances had changed little over this time.

2.2.1 Changes in circumstances

The following examples of changes in circumstances demonstrate that this was often positive, for example, a move into employment or training, or having made progress towards taking a degree, although one woman reported having moved from a job to unemployment. For others, the changes were around their family

circumstances; women reported getting married or having children. The final example in this section shows how women in these communities can also be affected by a complex range of social, family and health issues. In short, these women present a wide range of circumstances and experiences. It was noticeable that all of the case histories demonstrating significant change or progress concerned women who were in their 20s or early 30s and most were second rather than first generation migrants to the UK, or had come to the UK when they were very young.

Moving into employment

Of the 22 women who were reinterviewed, only a small number who were not working at the time of the first interview had entered employment by the time of the second interview. The two case studies below provide examples of women who moved into employment.

One young Pakistani woman, aged 20, was claiming Jobseeker's Allowance at the time of the first interview. She had been in an accident and had hurt her back, which had prevented her from working for some time, although she had done some voluntary work and had taken some taster courses while applying for suitable jobs.

At the time of the second interview her back injury was still giving her considerable pain. However, she had found work close to her home as an administrative assistant, for an employer who was flexible and allowed her time off to attend hospital appointments. Her employer had also encouraged her to attend college on a day release basis, and so she had just begun to study for an HNC in administration. She was third generation, and had married a first generation man who moved to the UK from Pakistan as a result. They had no children.

Another of the respondents, a Pakistani woman in her 20s, had also entered employment since the first interview. She had obtained work with a telecommunications company. She was hoping to forge a career there:

'Basically, I'm just trying to get a career in there now. I don't want to sit on the 'phones all my life. I want to do something.'

She lived with her mother (who was separated from her father) and her sisters. She was the only member of her household who was working.

Changing jobs

Only one of the respondents had changed their employment, and she had also had other changes in her life during this time.

A 24 year old second generation Bangladeshi woman had been working as an interpreter and also in a fast food restaurant at the time of the first interview. She

was living with her parents and siblings after separating from her husband. Since the last interview she had obtained a job as a customs officer at an airport, had reconciled with her husband and was in the process of buying her own flat.

Progressing with education or training

A number of the women had continued with education or training, and had made progress with the courses they had been doing at the time of the first interview, sometimes specialising, or adding additional courses to try to increase their eventual chances of employment. One had changed the part-time work she had been doing to better accommodate her studies. Another had made firm plans to re-enter education, with the eventual aim of studying for a degree.

A Pakistani woman in her 30s who had been born and brought up in the UK was, at the time of the first interview, divorced and living with her two children whilst working part-time and studying for a degree. She had married at the age of 16, but her husband and his family had very traditional views, including that women should not work, and this had eventually contributed to the breakdown of her marriage. By the time of the second interview she had changed job; from a support worker at a sheltered housing project for teenage mothers to working as a bilingual adviser to a mental health charity. She worked part-time to fit around her studies and her children. She was still doing a degree and had decided to specialise in social work as a result of her work in sheltered housing. She had completed two years of her degree and had two more years of study before she qualified.

A first generation Pakistani woman aged 38 had been claiming Income Support whilst taking a course in childcare at a local community organisation. She had been claiming Income Support for four years and had never done any paid work. She lived with her husband and two children but felt that childcare was a significant barrier to her working. By the time of the second interview she was still doing the childcare course, but had also started a classroom assistant course as she felt that this would give her more job opportunities:

'I thought, "I've been doing all these courses but they're not going to give me a job". So with the classroom assistant course I was told there were lots of chances, opportunities and they were looking for females to help along with the teachers.'

She was still receiving Income Support as her courses were for less than 15 hours a week. Her husband, who was unemployed, was also studying at a local college to improve his chances of finding employment. The respondent appreciated the opportunities that studying had given her.

A second generation Bangladeshi woman in her early 20s who lived with her parents and sister, reported at the time of the last interview that she had not been able to complete her A' levels due to illness. She had experience of working full-time in a community centre and for a government department, but at the time she was interviewed she was claiming Jobseeker's Allowance. By the time of the second interview, she was doing voluntary work in a community centre, had a place on an Access course to help her get to university, and had plans to get married. She hoped to study for an education degree and work as a primary school teacher. She had been on the New Deal but said that she had always been able to get job interviews even before that. However, she felt that at interview she did not come across as being confident enough, which is why she had not managed to get more work.

Having children

Two of the respondents had had children during the time between the first and second interviews. They were both concentrating on looking after their babies, although one woman had firm plans to return to work when their child was a little older.

A Pakistani woman who was 25 at the time of the first interview had gained a degree in chemistry but found it hard to get relevant work. She had taken temporary jobs for a while before securing a job for a large organisation as an account manager. She and her husband, who had a Masters degree, planned to set up their own business in the future. By the time of the second interview they had a young daughter who was three months old, and the respondent had moved back in with her mother. Her husband lived close by, and they hoped to buy a house together. The respondent had taken a year of maternity leave from her job, and was planning to either return to that job on a part-time basis, or to try and work from home.

A Pakistani woman aged 23 at the time of the first interview had moved to the UK when she was five. She had recently got married in Pakistan and had hoped that her husband would be able to join her soon in the UK. She was not claiming benefits but was looking for work to enable her husband to come to the UK. By the time of the second interview her husband had recently moved to the UK, and they had a six month old baby.

The respondent had not been able to find work to enable her husband to move to the UK but after the baby was born he was able to come to the UK after she had presented the birth certificate.

The respondent's husband was now working in a local warehouse, although he had a Masters degree and had worked as a radio producer in Pakistan. The respondent was concentrating on looking after their baby, while her husband worked in order to stay in the country:

'He can't get straight into a job here because of the language barrier. He knows English but there's an accent difference. The first two years he'll have to work hard and show his pay slips to get his permanent stay. He's just got any job and he's finding it okay. That's his first job and he hopes to stay in it for two years, even if he has to leave this he has to get another one. After two years he's planning to study and get back into his own career he had before.'

Of her own future plans she said:

'(I want to) look after the little one. I would like to go to work but not right at this moment. He's too small, he needs his mum, especially when he's teething.'

Becoming unemployed

Only one of the women had become unemployed since the first interview.

A 20 year old second generation Pakistani woman who was living at her parents' house and working as a receptionist for a solicitor at the time of the first interview, had become unemployed again shortly before the second interview. She had enjoyed the job but left after 11 months as her employers had not given her a contract and had changed her duties without adjusting her pay accordingly. She was not claiming any benefits, but was looking for work again, and hoped to work in another law firm. All of her sisters and friends worked and her family were 'fine' with her working. Since the first interview she had also gained a GCSE in law which she had studied for in the evenings at college.

Complex health and family issues

This final case study illustrating a change in circumstances provides an example of how women in these communities can also be affected by a complex range of social, family and health issues.

One of the respondents, a young Bangladeshi woman, was married and living with her husband and his family at the time of the first interview. She had one daughter who had been taken from her by social services when she was born because she was a drug user. She was also experiencing marital problems and was trying to get a flat for her and her daughter. At the time of the second interview she was on a methadone prescription, had her daughter back, and had had another daughter. She still considered her husband to be part of her family, although she was no longer living with him; she had found a flat through a Homeless Persons Unit, partly as a result of her daily methadone medication. She was waiting for a placement for her daughter in the nursery of the local primary school.

2.2.2 No changes, or few changes in circumstances

This section presents case histories of women whose lives had changed little between the first and second time they were interviewed. The more positive examples concerned women who were well established in their careers and had remained in the same job, often juggling work and childcare responsibilities with the help of their husbands or other family members. However, there were a number of less positive stories from women who had, in the past, suffered from marriage break-ups, depression and other ill-health which prevented them from making progress in any areas of their lives. These women were of a wide age range, encompassing those in their 20s to women in their 50s. Taken together with the case studies in the previous section, they demonstrate the diverse experiences, both positive and negative, which exist amongst women in the Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities in the UK.

Working in a well-established job

A few of the women who were reinterviewed had no changes in their circumstances as they had, for some time, been working in the same well-established jobs. Their employment suited their current circumstances well and they had no reason to seek any changes. One of the women felt that she might seek to marry in the future, and felt that her employment situation would need to change, particularly after she had children.

A Pakistani woman in her early 30s had been working for a public sector organisation, whilst juggling caring for her daughter. She had worked for the organisation for 14 years, and had received a lot of help with childcare from her mother and sister. She had been born in the UK, but her husband came over from Pakistan after they were married. He worked as a taxi driver, and also helped with looking after their daughter, for example, taking her to school and picking her up from his mother-in-law. At the time of the second interview, the family's circumstances were unchanged.

Another Pakistani woman who had arrived in the UK aged 14, but was now in her 30s, also worked in the same public sector job she reported during the first interview. Before gaining employment she had taken GCSEs at school, followed by a BTEC at college and then a degree in business organisation. She lived with her husband and their two children who were aged eight and five.

A Bangladeshi women in her early 20s, who had moved to the UK when she was very young, had gained a degree whilst working part-time in a range of community-based roles. At the time of the first interview she worked full-time for a Bangladeshi youth organisation, and by the time of the second interview she still worked there, although in a different role. She still lived with her parents and extended family. She thought that she would probably get married in the next few years, and that it would probably be a marriage arranged by her parents. She felt that she would work until she had children and then she would take a break while her children were small.

Being unemployed

The following example provides an illustration of how unemployment can persist due to multiple barriers. It also shows how, in some families, there has been a strong shift in attitudes and aspirations of women in just one generation.

A Bangladeshi woman in her 50s was living with her four children and claiming Jobseeker's Allowance at the time of the first interview. She was a lone parent as her husband had died several years ago.

Her English language was very limited and she had no formal education either in the UK or Bangladesh where she spent her formative years. She had never worked and did not think that women should work outside the home. However, her children felt differently, and her daughters were at university. At the time of the second interview her circumstances had not changed.

Caring for family members

One of the respondents had caring responsibilities for her mother-in-law which took up a large amount of her time. By the time of the second interview, her mother-in-law's health had deteriorated, and the time she needed to devote to caring for her had increased, meaning that she was no longer able to pursue other activities such as voluntary work.

A 28 year old Bangladeshi woman who had come to the UK ten years ago for marriage was claiming Jobseeker's Allowance at the time of the first interview. She had obtained qualifications in Bangladesh and had worked in a nursery. In the UK she had done some ESOL courses, and some voluntary work in a school. She and her husband did not have any children, and her husband was often away for work. The respondent had caring responsibilities for her mother-in-law who had a health condition that required frequent hospital visits. By the time of the second interview, she was still claiming Jobseeker's Allowance, and had not done any courses or voluntary work for a year as caring for her mother-in-law was taking up increasing amounts of her time. It seemed that the respondent had also separated from her husband.

Depression and low confidence

At the time of the first interview, a number of women had reported depression and low confidence, which were preventing them from making progress towards employment. A number of these women who were reinterviewed reported that their conditions were largely unchanged 18 months later. All three of the women in the examples presented below reported that their depression was related to the break-up of their marriage, and the difficult circumstances they had found themselves in as a result of this.

A Pakistani woman in her 40s who was interviewed for the first study had been depressed and lacking in confidence as a result of the break-up of her 17 year marriage a number of years ago. She had never worked but had been doing some short courses at the time of the first interview, and was trying to rebuild her life, but she was finding this very difficult. At the time of the second interview she seemed to have progressed a little in terms of engaging in education opportunities, but she said she was still very depressed. She was doing a short course for single parents which was aimed at boosting her confidence, and she hoped to do a business studies course at the same college. However, she seemed to think that she might have left it too late in her life to make significant changes, and that she had put up with her husband's bad behaviour both during the marriage and after it had ended, for too long.

'What depresses me, I think I went down, down, and it's a bit late for me. Then I think I'm not young anymore, I could have done so much in my life if only I could have stuck by myself. I could have done so much. It makes me feel bad.'

Another Pakistani woman in her 40s had a similar story. She had grown up in Pakistan and had worked in a school for two years before coming to the UK when she got married.

Since then she had not worked. Her husband left her several years ago to live with another woman, and she became very depressed. She also felt very ashamed that her marriage had broken down. She did not have a family support network close to her as all of her family were in Pakistan, and they felt that she should make the best of her life in the UK. She said that she was still very traumatised and depressed over the break-up of her marriage. Her English was limited, although she had taken English classes in the past, and was thinking about taking them again. She lived with her three children, and although the respondent's circumstances had not changed in the time since the last interview, her daughter had gained a place to study pharmacy at university, which she was very pleased about.

A Bangladeshi woman in her 20s who had come to the UK from Sylhet when she was five had also experienced depression when her marriage broke up two years ago, and had been on medication from her doctor for this. Her marriage had been abusive and her husband had been violent towards her, but she had no family support for her decision to leave the marriage, which she felt had contributed to her condition. Aside from having moved to a different flat in a quieter location, her circumstances were largely unchanged from the time of the first interview. She had done retail work and care work before she had married, and said that she would like to work again, but her depression prevented her from doing so. Initially, she had claimed Jobseeker's Allowance, but had moved onto Income Support as she felt unable to work.

Other health problems

There were also examples of women who had other health problems which, at the time of the first study, were preventing them from moving into education or employment. Two of the women who were re-interviewed reported that their health was unchanged or worse, and their stories are outlined below.

A second generation Pakistani woman in her 30s who had been married but was now divorced, lived with her parents and brother at the time of the first interview. She had worked in a number of factories doing sewing or packing in the past but had to leave when her health started to deteriorate. When she was first interviewed she was claiming Jobseeker's Allowance but also did part-time work from home packing cards. Her mother was ill so the respondent was responsible for her care and for housework and shopping. The second interview revealed that her circumstances had not changed.

A Pakistani woman in her late 40s who had come to the UK in 1970 was single and living with her parents and her sister. She suffered from Crohn's disease and had a number of other health conditions including osteoporosis, high blood pressure and arthritis.

By the time of the second interview her health appeared to have deteriorated, and she had to spend a lot of time at the hospital. She received Disability Living Allowance and Income Support which she had been claiming for around ten years. She was not well enough to work, but studied sewing for a few hours each week at a women's centre.

2.3 Case histories from the new sample

Different sampling methods were used to obtain the original sample and the new sample (see Section 1.4.1 on sampling and recruitment), which together gave us the total of 60 interviews for this research. It was noticeable that some of the

women in the new sample had higher levels of education and/or more established careers than most of those from the original sample. To demonstrate the diversity of the women we interviewed for this study in terms of their backgrounds and life experiences, some of the life stories of women from the new sample are presented as case study examples here.

2.3.1 Second generation women

The following four case study examples are all of second generation women in their 20s who gained degrees before entering employment. The first two case studies are of women who were not yet married, both having opted to delay marriage and having children until later in their 20s, or possibly until their early 30s. The second case history is also interesting as the woman lived in a shared flat with a friend, away from her parents' home.

Case history 1

A second generation Pakistani woman, aged 28, had lived in Bradford all her life. Her parents had come to the UK in the late 1960s, settling first in London and then Bradford. Her father had worked in the local mill and her mother continued to do some cleaning work. The respondent went to a local university after doing an Access course, and obtained a degree in law and European business, and had worked part-time in a call centre while she studied. She now worked for a large utilities company in a customer services role, advising the construction industry on new supply connections. Her parents, particularly her mother, had wanted her to be a doctor or a lawyer, but she had always been more interested in business subjects. She was not married, and said that people sometimes commented on this:

'Even now sometimes when people find out that I'm 28 and not married, regardless of whether they're Asian or English, it's "Oh my god, you're not married at 28!" A lot of people are very used to Asian girls being married at a young age which did happen and it still sometimes does happen, I think it's decreasing very slowly where girls are shipped off to Pakistan to get married at the age of 16 and not being allowed to continue their education. It's a perception people have of Asians. My parents didn't want to get us married off at 16. There was never that expectation from my parents. They were all for education. They've always encouraged us to study.'

She hoped that she might get married in the future, and although she would seek her parents' agreement she felt she would need to marry a man with an appreciation of both Eastern and Western culture, probably an Asian man who had been brought up in the UK. She felt that even if her husband was quite wealthy, being able to work was important to her, and she would always want to work, although perhaps she would work part-time or from home if she had children.

Case history 2

A 26 year old Bangladeshi woman lived in a flat with a flatmate. Her father, who had been an engineer in Bangladesh had originally come to the UK to find work:

'I think my dad was told that he could come here and be an engineer so then he came over. My mum came over about ten years later but he never got his job as an engineer actually, he worked in a factory for all his days until he retired, and I was born here. Two of my sisters were born here as well but my older sister was born in Bangladesh, she and my mum came over.'

She had three older sisters, all of whom had gone to university away from home. After her degree she was unable to find suitable work, so she studied for a postgraduate qualification in journalism, which was the career she had decided on when she was 14. She had not been able to find work in journalism, but instead worked for the civil service in a management position. Her parents had always encouraged her in her education, and she had always planned to go to university, but she had not imagined that getting the job she wanted would be so difficult:

'I thought I could come out of university and get a job but in actual fact I was looking for six months and after my post-grad I got a job This is like a job to pay the rent with, it is not a job that I want to do so I am still looking for a job. I wouldn't have thought I'd be 26 and in a job that I don't like would ever happen to me but it has, so it is just the way it is. But no, I would never have imagined it.'

She had written a book while she had been looking for work, and it had recently been published. Whilst she was pleased with this, she felt very sad that she might never achieve her dream of working in journalism. She felt that her best option might be to stay in her current job and develop her writing outside her paid work. She said that she would expect to be married by her mid-30s at the latest, and she also expected to have children.

The third and fourth case study examples are of second generation women who were married. The woman in case history 3, who did not yet have children, had spent several years working in the private sector before changing to work for a public sector organisation in order to achieve a better work-life balance. This woman's story also demonstrates the importance of marrying within religion, although in line with the two earlier case studies, she too had felt that it was now more acceptable to delay getting married, and in particular, to delay having children.

Case history 3

A second generation Bangladeshi woman aged 29 said her father had come to the UK in the early 1960s, and had married her mother in Bangladesh ten years later (it was an arranged marriage). She graduated with a degree in sociology and then worked for a number of private sector organisations before moving to work in human resources in the public sector. She has found the public sector to be a more flexible, supportive and comfortable environment to work in. She and her husband had been married for four years and had no children, but hoped to start a family in the next few years. Hers was a 'love' marriage; her husband was from the Middle East and was originally Christian, but for 'cosmetic' purposes, to placate her family, he converted to Islam before they were married. She felt that expectations to marry within culture and religion were still strong, although it had become acceptable now for women to marry and have children later than had previously been the case.

The final case study of a second generation woman was in some ways similar to the stories of the first three women. She too had gained a degree before entering employment. However, she had had two arranged marriages, the first of which had ended in divorce. She had two children, one from each marriage; she continued to work, and used formal childcare.

Case history 4

A Pakistani woman aged 28 worked full-time as a development officer at a university. She was married and had two children, one aged eight and the other aged 15 months. She had a degree in management and organisation studies and was also currently studying for a PGCE. Her husband also worked, so they used formal childcare for their youngest daughter. Of the two of them, she was the most qualified and also earned the most. She felt that over time women were concentrating to a greater extent on work and education.

'More women are going out working or studying or doing things for themselves. With my parents my mum's role was at home looking after the kids and that attitude's changing with our generation. We're thinking it's not just about having kids, it's about doing something for yourself and taking responsibility of your kids as well....That's still the same now but we want to do more for our children. It's not just about giving them a roof and clothing them, it's about giving them more in life. Inspiring them to go and do better for themselves. We didn't have that sort of aspiration when we were young. We were never encouraged to go to university, get a job or do something for yourself.'

Case history 4 (continued)

She was currently married to her second husband. She was married for the first time at 19, to her first cousin via an arranged marriage (she was engaged when she was 15). Her eldest daughter is from this marriage. She moved to Hong Kong to live with her husband. They divorced a year after their daughter was born.

She met her second husband when she was 24 (again through an arranged marriage) and married shortly after. However, she felt she had more input into the choice of her second husband. Nevertheless, her parents remained a strong influence on her choice of husband and it was important to her that a husband could relate to and understand her parents.

'I was struggling to find somebody who I thought could relate not just to me and my daughter but to relate to my family as well. I have to think about my parents as well. This person has to fit in. My dad is completely illiterate, he can't read and write and he's very old fashioned. I needed somebody who could be on the same level as my parents.... They are probably happy with what I've done with getting married to a relative and somebody from the village they can relate to as well.'

2.3.2 First generation women

This section presents four more case history examples, this time from women with a first generation migrational background. There are a lot more differences between these four women than was evident amongst the four case histories of second generation women that were presented in the previous section.

The first example is of a woman who obtained vocational qualifications before finding work in social care. She was unmarried and lived with her parents. She planned to get married and have children, at which point she would take a break from working.

Case history 5

A 22 year old Pakistani woman had moved to the UK with her parents when she was ten. At school she had gained GCSEs, and an NVQ in care work. She worked for social services with elderly and frail people to help them live independently in their own homes. She also did care work through an agency. She was not married, and lived with her parents, brothers and sisters in a house owned by one of her brothers.

Case history 5 (continued)

She spoke Punjabi at home with her parents, but English with her siblings and outside the home. Her parents no longer worked, but her sister-in-law and brother worked, and one of her sisters was at university. She felt that she would probably get married in the next few years, and when she had children she would stay at home to look after them when they were very young, but then she would want to return to work. She said that she would be happy to use formal childcare, as it helped children to learn more than they would at home.

The next case study is of an older woman who came to the UK when she was quite young. She obtained a business qualification at college, and then worked for a government agency before getting married and having children. She took a few years out of the labour market as she had her three children within three years of getting married, but had been working for a community organisation for some years. She was a Christian, and like many of the Muslim women who took part in this research, she felt it was vitally important for her children to marry people who were of the same religion.

Case history 6

A Pakistani women in her 40s had come to the UK with her mother and sisters in 1967 to join her father who had arrived seven years earlier. Her parents had always encouraged her in her education, but she had initially found school very difficult because at that time there was no help or support for children who were new to the UK.

'These days there are lots of classes, support and help, but when we came in '67 there was hardly any help. I remember very clearly the teacher used to give me a massive English book and used to say go and sit in the corner and so I personally feel I would have done better if somebody had been there to support us.... Apart from the language, academically I don't think I learned anything else but what I already knew. In our country we take education very seriously from early childhood and maths and other subjects like science. I was quite advanced for my age group when we arrived here. But I wasn't able to do the 11 plus because I didn't have the language. Especially maths, I haven't learned anything in this country.'

Case history 6 (continued)

Despite these difficulties, she gained six O' levels, and went on to do a two year business management course at college, before working for a government department. She married when she was 23, and quickly had three children (all now in their 20s). She stayed at home to look after them for three years and then returned to work, doing a number of different jobs in the public sector. She had been working for a community organisation for women, providing vocational training for 12 years, helping to build it from small beginnings into a well equipped and thriving centre for women from all ethnic backgrounds.

Unlike most of the women interviewed for this research, she and her family were Pakistani Christians:

'We are a minority definitely but there are quite a few Christians in Pakistan which other people, other countries don't understand When I tell people they're really shocked because they think everybody who lives in Pakistan is Muslim.'

Religion was very important to her. Her own marriage was to a Pakistani Christian man, and she said of her children that they could marry whoever they chose, as long as they were Christian:

'I would rather have my son marry an English girl than marry out of religion. That's more important.'

The final two case study examples are from young women who were both studying for Masters degrees. The woman in the first example did not consider herself to be religious, although she was Muslim by birth. She had a boyfriend but felt that her eventual marriage might have an element of family arrangement or introduction. The woman in the final example was from a highly educated family. She had spent some of her childhood in the United Arab Emirates as a result of her father's work. She and her husband had come to England to study, and she felt that after finishing her masters degree they would probably start a family. Once she had children she was planning to take time away from employment to look after them.

Case history 7

A 25 year old Bangladeshi woman had come with her mother and siblings to join her father in the UK when she was four years old. Her family was from the Bengali region of Bangladesh, which she described as generally more middle class and literary than many of the non-Bengali areas of the country. After gaining GCSEs at school she went to college and studied English and social science subjects at 'A' level, after which she gained a degree in anthropology. She then worked for a housing association for three years, working her way up to a management position but said that she felt too young to be in that role, so she decided to leave and study for a Masters degree in social work. She was in the first year of a course which would take her three years to complete. She had a boyfriend who she had met at a Bengali language class, but was not sure whether she would marry him. However, she wanted to buy a property and get married in the next few years, perhaps with the aid of a marriage CV which she said were common in her community.

'Sylhetis or Bengalis, not Pakistanis, they are really strict, very different, have marriage CVs and they are exactly like proper CVs where you put your mum's details, your dad's, the village they come from, you put down how religious you are, moderate, practising, what you want from your partner, moderate, practising or whatever and you put down your qualifications, what you are looking for, where you want to live, your interests, your hobbies, it is like a proper CV and everyone has one apart from me, they are quite good because you can give them out, so yeah, you just give them to aunties and stuff and have introductions.'

She also wanted children, perhaps two or three, and said that although she would want to stop work to look after them when they were little, once they had gone to school she would want to work, perhaps part-time or four days a week. On whether she followed a religion she said:

'Not really no, I don't really believe in religion but I am supposed to be a Muslim. My brother and sisters, the middle two, more my brothers, are very practicing. The Bengalis who came here originally are more like hippies. Bengal is not an Islamic State, it is very sort of 'hippyish' and if you go there, their prophets are mostly their poets, they are really not so much into religion. The ones who have come here have become more religious because I think Islam can give them more guidance.'

Case history 8

A Bangladeshi woman aged 24 had recently moved to the UK with her British husband. She was born in Bangladesh, and lived there until she was 12, when she moved with her parents to the United Arab Emirates, and did most of her schooling there. She had been educated in English, and she considered this to be her first language, although she also spoke Bengali and a little French. She had moved back to Bangladesh when she was 18, and lived there for six years before moving with her husband to the UK.

Before coming to the UK she had gained a degree in marketing and then worked for a multinational company in Bangladesh, where she had met her husband. She and her husband were both studying for Masters degrees in the UK, hers was in human resource management. She said that her religion was very important to her, and that although she didn't currently cover her hair, she planned to in the future, and she always dressed modestly. She was not sure whether she and her husband would stay in the UK after completing their Masters degrees, or whether they would move back to Bangladesh. All of her family were highly educated, and worked in professions including medicine, engineering, and teaching. Her mother was qualified to teach but stayed at home to look after her daughter (she was an only child). She herself was planning to start a family in the next two years, and she said that she and her husband hoped to have at least three children. She also said that she would not work, preferring to stay with her children until they were 'old enough to look after themselves'.

3 Attitudes towards the family and home

This chapter discusses the attitudes and experiences of the respondents in their family and home life. The chapter looks in turn at:

- the respondents' views on, and experiences of, marriage;
- their views on having and caring for children;
- attitudes towards other caring responsibilities and domestic responsibilities;
- leisure time and socialising.

3.1 Marriage

This section looks at the views and attitudes towards marriage among those who are single, and then the attitudes and experiences of those who are, or who have been, married. It then turns to the views of family and the wider community towards marriage and whether these are changing.

Among the respondents, 36 were married and 24 were single. Among those there were seven who were currently separated, divorced or widowed. There were no examples of cohabitation. There was an almost universal wish to be married among the respondents, and more than this, an assumption that they would be married at some point in their lives.

3.1.1 Single women

Those in our sample who were not, and had never been, married were all fairly young, commonly in their teens and 20s. They were, for the most part, either studying or working, although some were seeking work. A minority had never worked, usually due to their family requiring them to fulfil a role at home.

Views on when and how to marry

The age at which respondents thought they might get married varied, but was typically at some time during their 20s. Respondents often reported pressure from the family to get married, particularly from the older generation. This pressure seemed to increase as they got further into their 20s, especially if older siblings were already married:

'You get pressured by parents. When you are from a Bangladeshi background you can't be over 25 and not married. If you are studying they will support you. You can't be older than 30 unless you are doing a doctor degree or something. Actually they are alright about it. My dad will pressure me and be like, "you know, you're getting towards 24, 25". Before you couldn't get to know him but now at least you get to know them a little for like a month and get to decide if it is yes or no. It needs to change, I hope it does. Now it does, I do get my say. Before it was just my dad. My mum backs us up. It is like things are changing and now my dad has to come to terms with this. Understanding it is too much pressure for girls to get married at a young age.'

(Bangladeshi woman in her 20s)

'When I was younger my mum actually arranged a marriage for me and I said I wasn't going to do it and I was going to university. She was really strict on me, she was quite horrible to me.'

(Bangladeshi woman in her 20s)

Although there was a universal wish to get married at some point, single respondents often felt they wanted to wait until they were older to get married. There was a common wish to complete some studies and/or have some experience of working before marriage. In many cases there was a lot of family support for this. Most people had the same wishes if they were to have a daughter of their own – they wanted them to have a happy marriage, without pressure regarding when and who they should marry:

'My parents didn't want to get us married off at 16. There was never that expectation from my parents. They were all for education. They've always encouraged us to study. My mum expected us to get married younger. Not 16 but possibly 22, 23, at a decent age. My sister got married at 30 and I'm still not married. They've never pressurised us. Also, a lot of parents pick their children's partners for them, my parents, as much as they'd love to do that, have said, "if you find somebody tell us and we'll sort something out". It's never been forced marriages. That's never happened in our family for which I'm grateful. I've seen a lot of results of forced marriages and it's not nice.'

(Pakistani woman in her 20s)

'I want to get married after my PhD. My parents are quite worried about that. They're saying "you're a bit old aren't you and you might not get the right match. If you don't find anyone would you maybe agree to go back home and perhaps marry a doctor" and I'm like "no way". I prefer to marry someone who was born in Britain. I think I will understand them more.'

(Bangladeshi woman in her teens)

There were a mixture of views about how the wedding would come about, whether it would be an arranged marriage and who they should marry. Some women did not mind the idea of an arranged marriage if they felt they had some say in who and when they would marry. Some wanted to find their own husbands and there were differing reactions to this from their families. Those who wanted to find their own husbands thought it was important that they had things in common with their husband and often thought they wanted to marry someone from the UK of a similar background to themselves:

'I have got a boyfriend at the moment but I honestly don't know about it. My parents know who he is because we went to school together but I think they would be ok because they've always said if you find someone at University tell us, they were like, "we would rather you marry a Pakistani boy because that means you'll understand each other", obviously a Muslim boy and they were always like, "you should be educated and we want you to marry someone who is educated so you are on the same level". They don't want us to marry anyone from Pakistan or anything.'

(Pakistani woman in her teens)

'One of those things you think is yes of course I am going to get married. I always wanted my own place and I said to my mum I wouldn't move out on my own. She said, "as long as he is a Muslim boy I am happy".'

(Pakistani woman in her teens)

'My elder sister will be getting married this year, she's 24, so I'm next in line after her, but nothing is agreed of yet. My family will prefer me getting married to someone within the family. Not a first cousin but someone we know the background of so you can say "that's a good person for my daughter to get married to".'

(Pakistani woman in her 20s)

'My family are actively looking to get me married. I've left it to them because it's nice to get married and have kids.'

(Bangladeshi woman in her 20s)

It seemed that a traditional viewpoint, where parents have ultimate control, but with some consideration of their wishes, was most common amongst the unmarried respondents.

Views on being married

Being married was seen as a positive experience and one of the most important aspects of life. Respondents looked forward to more independence, having their own home and someone to share their life with when they were married:

'I look forward to just kind of sharing, just being able to share life I think really. Just knowing you've got someone to plan out the rest of your years with.'

(Bangladeshi woman in her 20s)

Concerns about being married mainly revolved around having to answer to their husband's family, having to live with their husband's family, having to take on responsibility, having to adapt to another person's habits and losing freedom. Younger people tended to view marriage as an equal partnership and although the husband was often seen to be the main breadwinner, it was not seen as vital. A fairly pragmatic approach to working and looking after the family seemed to be expected among the unmarried respondents:

'Who earns more depends on who gets a better job because if I get a decent job it will be me or if he gets a decent job it will be him.'

(Pakistani woman in her teens)

There were some who believed in a more traditional approach and saw the traditional gender roles as valuable and important to them in any future marriage. There were mixed views on whether they would or should continue to work or study after getting married. Some felt emphatically that they wanted to stop work. Some felt that they should stop working or that there would be pressure on them to stop even if they didn't want to. Some wished to stop working but financial pressures meant this was not an option:

'I want to do it at the right time. If I do get married I want to do it properly. I don't want to get married and have a job as well. Because the way I've been brought up, marriage is a very sacred thing. It's not about you any more when you get married. It's not just one person and you have to respect that person. It's not that your husband's your boss, it's just that you have to give respect to your husband and your family if you do get married. You have to do it for yourself as well. As much as it is coming from your husband.'

(Pakistani woman in her 20s)

'I want him to work but I don't want to stop working either.'

(Pakistani woman in her teens)

'I started work at 16. I'd have to carry on even if I did it part-time. Even if I married someone who was loaded I think I'd still work just for me. I wouldn't be able to sit at home and do nothing.'

(Pakistani woman in her 20s)

Only one participant had never had any intention or desire to be married:

'I always wanted to work. That's why I didn't get married. Because when you are married you're tied up. I was an independent, strong woman. If I can do it I don't need a man. I was really married to my work. My mother always wanted me to marry, to have children and have my own life. I'm quite happy being single.'

(Pakistani woman in her 50s)

3.1.2 Those who are married

The next section will examine the views and experiences of those who were married (or widowed) at the time of the interview. Those who were separated or divorced are discussed in the following section.

Age and circumstances upon marriage

Most of the married respondents had married fairly young. This was particularly the case for arranged marriages when women were commonly in their late teens or early 20s. Those who had married when they were in their mid-20s or older had not usually had arranged marriages. Those who had come to the UK from abroad (either to get married or after getting married to a British citizen) tended to not be working, although some had been studying. Those who were living in the UK when they married were likely to either be studying or working at the time of their marriage.

How the marriage came about

The ways in which the respondents had met their husbands was very varied. Arranged marriages were common but the exact nature of how the couple met differed. For a few, the wedding was the first time they had met their husband, or there had only been telephone contact before the wedding day. This, however, seemed to be becoming less common and instead there was often some contact before the wedding. In some cases women had known their husband for many years before the wedding, either through their husband being a member of the wider family or community network. This was particularly so for those women who were first generation migrants to the UK:

'My dad was very strict. He really wanted to control our lives and I respected my parents and wouldn't do anything against their will. He wanted us to get married in the family. I couldn't have a love marriage from outside the family.'

(Pakistani woman in her 20s)

It also seemed fairly common for women to say that although they could not choose their husband if they were having an arranged marriage, they had some say if they were not happy and there were some examples of engagements being called off because of an unhappy bride-to-be:

'I knew I was going to have an arranged marriage and I got used to the idea as I knew who he was and what he was like. The first one I said no, so when my dad mentioned the second one I said that's fine.'

(Pakistani woman in her 30s)

Most women whose marriages had been arranged, although not always overtly happy about it, seemed quite accepting of the situation and said they had always known it would happen. Some expressed a view that they had more say than their parents' generation had in who they married and when. There were many examples among arranged marriages of one of the couple having been resident abroad at the time of the wedding and coming to the UK after their marriage.

There were some examples of marriages occurring where women had met their husbands independently of their families. Some met through friends, at college or university, or through work. Family reactions to this were varied. In some cases this situation was seen as the norm and arranged marriages had never been an expectation. For some, their family were accepting of the situation as long as the prospective husband was seen as suitable in terms of character, background, religion and/or culture. For others, this met with hostile reaction from the family for many reasons. In some cases families objected to the background, character, religion or culture of the prospective husband. There may also have been objections to the way in which the couple met, or there may have been someone else that the family had in mind. Religious compatibility – or rather a perceived lack of this – was a cause of some conflict.

Among all marriages, it was fairly common for the wedding to have taken place in either Pakistan or Bangladesh where extended family networks could attend.

Experience of married life

Marriage was sometimes seen as a way to gain independence from parents, especially among those who were young when they married. Sometimes this had happened and the women were enjoying more independence with their husbands than they had whilst living with their parents. But this had not always been the case, and some women felt that control had shifted from parents to husband, or that they had lost their independence through being married:

'I thought if I got married I'd get a bit more freedom. My husband is really good. I don't believe in men stopping women doing anything. I'm my own boss. I think I take it out on him. What I saw my father do with my mum. I couldn't put up with it.'

(Pakistani woman in her 30s)

'We weren't allowed out. We didn't have any friends. Then I got a husband who was even worse. My father had the love, he didn't have the love, my husband. I thought I'd be a happy person, get more freedom to be honest. Somebody would be there, but no. It was worse.'

(Pakistani woman in her 40s)

For the most part, experiences of marriage were positive and most women spoke very positively about their husbands. Their comments included that it was nice to have someone to talk to, someone to have companionship with, being part of a family was enjoyable, their husband was a good provider and/or supportive of them. Some women had been encouraged by their husbands to learn new skills, do English courses, complete further education or learn to drive which were all seen to improve the marriage and improve independence. These were usually younger women who had married more recently. Most of the negative comments regarding marriage revolved around losing independence, or being prevented from taking part in activities they enjoyed or found rewarding. There were also negative comments about not being able to spend time with their own families or being controlled by the extended family.

Most agreed they had more freedom and choice now about who to marry, where to live, and how to live than their mothers had, despite the fact that there were still limitations:

'Mum didn't have a choice. She got married, went straight to the in-laws and that was what was expected of them. Clean and cook, look after people, not have much of a life and be controlled. Having to ask to do everything and the freedom to do nothing. I can just go shopping, that type of thing.'

(Pakistani woman in her 20s)

Marriage and paid work/education

Those who came to the UK after getting married or to get married, were unlikely to work immediately following the marriage. This was often due to language skills and not being familiar with the new country as well as due to their own, their husbands' and wider families' belief that the husband should be the breadwinner. They were less likely to assume they had a choice and less able to assert themselves due to being unfamiliar with their surroundings.

In contrast, those who were living in the UK when they married were usually studying or working at the time of their marriage. For the most part this seemed to continue, although in a few cases there was some level of negotiation with a new husband in order for this to happen. The birth of children was more likely than marriage itself to lead to a woman ceasing work. Some women chose not to work, seeing marriage as more important. Some women felt pressure to stop work from their husband or the wider family. However, many women saw work and bringing money into the household as a joint responsibility. Attitudes of the wider family also played a role here, especially the views of the older generation who in some cases were trying to influence the couple into taking on traditional roles. There were a few examples of women who lost their jobs as a result of taking time off to go abroad to get married.

3.1.3 Those who were divorced or separated

A very small number of respondents had been married and were now divorced or separated. There were noticeably high commitment levels to making a marriage work and those who had ended a marriage had been through a long ordeal before coming to that decision. Many whose marriages had ended reported being depressed, suicidal, feeling guilty and shameful.

There were many reasons for marriages ending, including one husband who left his wife to live with another woman, one ending a long marriage with an abusive partner, one partner being very controlling, and some cases of simply not getting along. In all cases there did seem some level of pressure from members of the wider family for the marriage to continue, and for both parties to try to overcome their difficulties and make the best of it. These views were usually held by members of the older generation, most often fathers or grandparents.

A Pakistani woman in her 40s had stayed in an abusive relationship for many years. She had not wanted to fail in her marriage and her father would not entertain the idea of a separation. She became depressed and suicidal before eventually ending the marriage. She stayed in the marriage for a long time because of her father.

'He used to say, "What have you got to worry about? It's us, we've got to pay the bills and work and look after the house, what have you got?" He didn't understand you've got your heart as well.'

Another family member had recently been in a similar situation and had been in a very unhappy marriage and she had supported her in separating from her husband despite the protests of wider family.

'The difference is I'm not going to make her [stay with her husband]. What I went through, I don't want her to go through that.'

A divorced Pakistani woman in her 30s described how her marital troubles developed.

'Getting a car was a big thing for me. Driving for me meant I could go out and do things. Me getting too independent was an issue with my husband.'

She also went back to college to study social care which she saw as going with her faith (Islam) and putting something back into society.

'My husband couldn't understand and he was never supportive or interested. When I talk to the kids they say, "Dad is a bit old-fashioned". He is trying to teach them traditional roles. I taught my son to wash up and he'd belittle that. My husband was born here but he went back to Pakistan when he was 13 or 14 and maybe he never fitted in with this environment. We had different expectations. My in-laws thought I wanted too much freedom. I wasn't traditional and wouldn't stay home. I don't see why I should. In Islam you're not expected to either.'

Those who were divorced or separated either did not express any desire to remarry in the future, or were actively opposed to the idea of remarriage.

3.1.4 Changing attitudes?

Many of the respondents felt that attitudes towards marriage were changing in their communities, and that those of younger generations had views which were less traditional than those of older generations. Women who had been born in the UK also tended to have less traditional views than women born in Pakistan and Bangladesh regarding marriage. Less traditional views included being able to marry later in their lives than had been felt to be acceptable in the past; for example, not marrying until women were in their mid- or late 20s. Some felt that the pace of change in attitudes had been quite rapid:

'If you asked me five years ago about marriage and kids I would say there is quite a lot of arranged marriages but now I would say the parents open up their minds to let their children get married because they're happy.'

(Pakistani woman in her 20s)

'Like getting married, they are changing, let them become a bit more mature. Not at that young age. Let them enjoy their life. Let them get their education, let them make the decision.'

(Pakistani woman in her 30s)

Marrying a man of the same religion was still seen by most women to be of the utmost importance. Family approval of a future husband was also felt to be extremely important. Women reported a continuing preference for arranged marriages among many families, as it was felt that parents would be most able to choose suitable husbands for their daughters. Some of the women themselves said that they agreed with this, and that their own marriages would be, or had been arranged, and this had ensured their family's continued approval and support. Others had sought their family's approval of someone they had met through their extended family or, more occasionally, through friends or work.

Some of the respondents with daughters said that they wanted their daughters to have some say over who they married, so that even if the marriage was arranged, the couple had some influence if they were not happy with the arrangement. There were strong views from many that whilst 'forced' marriages did occur, they would not want this for themselves or their daughters:

A young woman in her 20s described how during a visit to Pakistan she decided not to marry:

'It was arranged but I thought it wasn't the right time. I was only 19. I have my whole life ahead of me. My mum was really supportive which I think is quite rare. Maybe it's because she's been here for so long, she's been here 22 years and she married pretty young. She probably thought there's no point in forcing me into it. There was pressure from my gran. She wanted me to be settled. Not that my mum doesn't but just when the time is right. She wanted me to be married one day but when she felt it was the right time and the right person.'

Some women said that it was becoming more common to have time to complete some education prior to marriage. A number of women interviewed had experienced this themselves, or were pursuing their education before considering their own marriages. A divorced woman who was married 20 years ago commented on how she felt things had changed since then:

'It was an arranged marriage. They said he was a good person, get married to him. I couldn't say no, you know. Now kids do. They get the choice.'

(Pakistani woman in her 40s)

It was reported that in some of the more traditional families, eldest daughters had less freedom in terms of whom, when, and where to marry. They were seen as setting a precedent for the family as a whole, but the arrangements (or otherwise) of their younger siblings' marriages were felt to matter less in terms of keeping the good reputation of the family intact:

'The eldest have to, not sacrifice, but think more about the wider family... my younger sister, nobody expected anything from her. A lot of my friends say because they are the eldest girl, they need to get married abroad. They don't have the option of getting married here.'

(Pakistani woman in her 20s)

However, some of the women felt that this tendency was slowly changing. According to many of the women interviewed, there is still a lot of stigma attached to separation and divorce in the Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities. However, there were occasional examples of how this may be starting to change, including the case in the previous section, of a mother who supported her daughter leaving her abusive husband.

Attitudes to women working or studying after marriage are also changing according to many of the women who took part in this study. There were some differences between those who had married very recently and those who had been married some time ago. The former had often continued to work or study after their marriage, in contrast to the latter who had usually concentrated on the role

of wife and mother. Many of the respondents felt it was becoming increasingly acceptable for women to work after marriage, and saw bringing money into the family as a joint responsibility:

'I always assumed I'd get married and have children and look after them. Nowadays they get married and have kids, they want to work, do something for themselves, get a better house, a better standard of living. That's the big change I think.'

(Pakistani woman in her 40s)

3.2 Having children

This section looks at the attitudes of the respondents towards having children and their experience of becoming a mother. Section 3.3 will look at their actual experience of parenting and of childcare. Firstly, we will look at the views of those without children and then the views and experiences of those with children. The section will conclude by looking at whether attitudes towards having children are changing.

As with marriage, there was an almost universal belief amongst respondents that they would have children at some time in their lives, although this hadn't always been formulated into an idea of when and/or how many children. Around half of the respondents were already mothers.

3.2.1 Those without children

There were 28 respondents who did not have children, and most of these women were fairly young, being in their teens and early 20s, although there was one woman in her 50s who had not had children. Most of those without children were not yet married but there were a few who were married and had not yet had children.

Married women

All respondents who were married but had not yet had children said that they wanted children at some time in the future. Most had a definite idea of when they would start a family, some were planning this imminently, while others felt they would do this in the next few years. The number of children women wanted varied, but was most commonly two or three. Smaller families were seen as preferential as they gave more time to devote to each child, and greater scope to provide for them financially. Most thought they would have children in their mid- to late 20s.

'I would like two girls and two boys but it's in the hands of God. You can only plan and wait for what happens.'

(Pakistani woman in her 20s)

'I just want two. He [husband] wants more. If he wants more he'll have to adopt and look after them himself. If you've got too many children you can't give time to all of them. If you have a small family I'll have all that time to give them and I want them to have a good education. I want to give them a good future.'

(Pakistani woman in her 20s)

Many of these younger women were currently in employment or studying and often they planned to establish themselves in a career before starting a family. Reasons stated for waiting a while after marriage before starting a family included wanting to finish studying, wanting to work in order to save and buy a home, to be more financially settled, and wanting to spend some time just with their husband:

'We definitely hope to have children. Not any definite dates but probably after we've done the studying bit. Probably after I've finished my Masters and dissertation. Probably late next year. We both love kids.'

(Bangladeshi woman in her 20s)

'I want children but when I'm ready for them. At this moment, financially, we're both not ready. I want to enjoy my life before I have children. I want to be settled. I want to travel. I'm also saving. We were thinking to sell this property and buy another house. I want to move in a good area. A bigger house if we want children. I want my own driveway and garage.'

(Pakistani woman in her 20s)

Women reported that pressure from family members to have children soon after getting married did exist, although this was felt to be lessening. The following quotes are examples of women who felt less pressure to have children soon after marriage as they saw other women in their families waiting before having children:

'Both my sisters are having children much later. Women that I know are having children later as well. I didn't necessarily get married just to have children. I don't really have that expectation. My father, he doesn't have, he is very pleased I'm married but he would never raise the issue of children in front of me.'

(Bangladeshi woman in her 20s)

'I'll be approaching 30 by then. I'd definitely like to have my first child by then. It would be a good age. I don't have a strong desire for motherhood now but it's more visible to me. My sister's got a baby now and she's having her second quite soon. She's 39. I don't see age as a barrier so much with having children. For me it's a reassurance the fact that she's older. I don't feel so pressured.'

(Bangladeshi woman in her 20s)

Single women

As mentioned previously, many of the respondents without children were not yet married. Almost all said they wanted children at some point, although their views on when and how many were not as clearly formulated as those who were married. Importantly, none of the respondents thought they would have children without being married first. The number of children they thought they might have was similar to married women without children and was typically two, three or four:

'Yes, I want to have kids. Most single people, all the boys, want to have kids. It is quite unusual to meet someone who doesn't. I would probably have two, I might have three.'

(Bangladeshi woman in her 20s)

'I'd love to be a mum, definitely. At about 24 or 25. I'd love three or four.'

(Pakistani woman in her 20s)

'I'd love to have them. It depends when I get married, if I get married. I think that's something you can only deal with when it comes.'

(Pakistani woman in her 20s)

It was common for women to place importance on the need to study and to have some experience of life outside the family before having children.

Work and motherhood

There was a range of views on whether those without children thought they would work or not if they had children. Those who were not working already thought they definitely would not work. Some thought they wouldn't want to work or study if they had small children and would want to devote their attention to their child; in fact, this was commonly stated as a reason for waiting a while after marriage to have a child, to have a chance to study and work before becoming a mother. A few thought they would like to carry on working, and some felt that they would prefer to work part-time. Some thought it might be a financial necessity to work after they had children:

'I don't know how I'd deal with work. Maybe I'd work part-time or possibly work from home depending on what I'm doing and how financially stable we are.'

(Pakistani woman in her 20s)

'Women want to work and then have children afterwards.'

(Pakistani woman in her 30s)

Many women felt that it was increasingly possible to combine paid work and motherhood, and there were examples where they thought the children's father could look after children, depending upon who was earning the most money:

'My partner loves children. He's better at looking after children than me so if he'd prefer to stay and look after his children while I go out to work that wouldn't be a problem either.'

(Bangladeshi woman in her 20s)

Those who did not want children

Hardly any of the respondents said that they didn't want children. The few that said this tended to be very young and had not really thought about marriage and children at that point in their lives. Therefore, it was mostly a 'not now' as opposed to a 'not ever':

'I don't like kids. I don't want my own, not yet. I can't stand kids. I want to wait until after I'm 25.'

(Pakistani woman in her 20s)

Only one participant said that she had actively chosen work over having children.

3.2.2 Those with children

Thirty-two of the respondents had children. They had all been married when they had their children, although a small number were now separated or divorced. Most of these respondents had always assumed they would have children.

Becoming a mother

Many of the women had their first child soon after marriage, especially those who were older, or those who had come to the UK from abroad after getting married, or to get married. This seems to be changing among the younger generation who wanted to wait a while before having children in order to be more financially settled, to finish studies or to spend some time with their new husband and become accustomed to married life:

'I wanted to be married two years before we had a child because he came from abroad. I'd heard so many stories about people changing when they come over here. I said we can have a child in two years and you can get on your feet by then as well. He didn't know English so I taught him English and he got a job and I said "yes that's it. We know where we stand so we can have a child. There's no point bringing a child into the world and we're not getting on and we don't understand each other. So that's why it needs two years." He agreed.'

(Pakistani woman in her 30s)

'I wanted to settle down, get my own house, then after that we'll try for a baby. I did all that. I had a job as well. When I was working at that time I knew I had to work, mortgage and bills. I didn't want to get pregnant. I got my property. I did it all up how I wanted to and then my husband had a job. I think she was born at the right time.'

(Pakistani woman in her 20s)

The mothers we interviewed commonly had two or three children, very few had one child and a few had more than three children. Most were in their 20s when they had their first child.

When mothers were asked if they became a parent when they had planned to earlier in their lives, the responses were linked to whether marriage had happened when they had imagined it would. Some women had had their first child much sooner after getting married than they had planned, while for a few it was further into their marriage than they had anticipated. Most had expected to have children at some point in their 20s which was mainly the case, but it was sometimes a few years either side of when they had expected. Some had originally thought they would have their children at a younger age, but had spent longer than anticipated studying, but equally some had become a mother earlier than they had expected. Some of the respondents had thought they would have children, but never had strong thoughts about exactly when until it had happened.

Work and motherhood

Those who were working when they became pregnant tended to stop work upon the birth of their child, although some went back to work soon afterwards, and some returned to work when their children were a little older. For some, returning to work was a financial necessity. Birth of further children did have an impact in some cases, as it made childcare increasingly difficult or made it difficult to be able to manage being a parent and working. (Looking after children and childcare is discussed further in Section 3.3.)

Those who were far away from the labour market when they had children were unlikely to work after becoming a mother. A few lacked the language skills necessary or had partners or extended family who did not want them to work and therefore, issues related to motherhood were not their main barrier to work.

Future plans

Some women who took part in this research wanted more children, although it was rare to be planning to have more than three children altogether. In some cases women felt there was pressure to have more children, especially if they only had one or two children by the time they had reached their 30s. Pressure seemed to come from older relatives, particularly those who lived abroad:

'When we'd had two they [her in-laws] were asking how many more we'd have. I didn't want any more children. I was working. I believe two children are enough to start off with. They can be a handful.'

(Pakistani woman in her 30s)

'My husband's family keep saying to him, "why aren't you having any more children? What's wrong with you?" But for a man from Pakistan to say "Mum, I don't want anymore kids", it's like, "what are you talking about? You've got to have more kids. You've got to have a son". Every so often we have this argument and his mum says we've got to have another child. The elders, they just don't understand. My mum, she says one is enough.'

(Pakistani woman in her 30s)

Most women were happy with the size of their family and thought that having a smaller family was a better option for them. Often women thought they may have more children but did not have any concrete plans. Financial concerns, the desire to stay working, and having enough time to spend with their children were the main factors that were taken into account:

'Nowadays it's nice to have a small family because it's expenditure isn't it. You can't afford to live yourself, then you've got loads of kids.'

(Pakistani woman in her 30s)

'I did not want to have more children because I am from a big family. I have eight brothers and sisters and my mum had help and physically she could not cope [having one child], every two years.'

(Bangladeshi woman in her 50s)

'I hope to keep the job but I don't know. It depends on the circumstances. If I have another child it would be really difficult. I don't think I could really do it. Who would look after the children?'

(Pakistani woman in her 20s)

3.2.3 Changing attitudes?

Some of the women interviewed felt that there had been a shift in attitudes between older and younger generations regarding having children. Younger women still wanted children but views on when to have children, how many children to have, and the extent to which it was seen to be acceptable to work or study after having children were reported to be changing. However, a small number of women felt that attitudes towards having children were not changing.

Some of the respondents said that many women were now choosing to have fewer children than had been the norm in the past. Many of the younger women felt that smaller families were simply more manageable, and although they thought that some of their older relatives would like them to have more children, they said that the older generation could often see the benefits of having smaller families. These benefits included being able to give each child more attention, improving their educational chances, and avoiding the financial pressures of having a large family, which some viewed as too burdensome:

'It is changing here more, not in Pakistan. Here people are educating and in jobs. They can't cope with the demands of too many children. In Pakistan it is normal to have six or seven children, it's impossible to know how you would raise those children here.'

(Pakistani woman in her 20s)

'The women are just becoming more conscious of family planning. They want to know what time they want to have kids and how many they want to have. Also, because it's the capital city, it's very difficult to get places to live in. It's very expensive, if you don't have a good job, you struggle a lot. People are taking into consideration the financial implications of having too many kids. So I think the average amount will be two.'

(Bangladeshi woman in her 20s)

'I think it has changed, especially for the second generation. I think people don't see having five children as the norm any more, which it was at one time. There was such a big emphasis on that. When we were younger we'd say "I've got this many aunties and this many uncles" and the more you had, the more status you had. That was drummed in a lot more. But it's changing nowadays and I think they want fewer children.'

(Pakistani woman in her 30s)

'It's hard work. We are eight brothers and sisters. Poor mum. Nowadays my mum tells me just one to two.'

(Pakistani woman in her 20s)

A number of women felt that, in their communities, it was becoming more common for married couples to delay having children until they had some financial security and had been able to create a stable home environment. In the past it had been accepted that women would have children very soon after they were married. It was also reported that in many families, women were increasingly encouraged to complete their education (for example, to gain a degree) before having children:

'For me, as soon as you got married the first time they'd ask you, you're pregnant. That's the first thing they ask you. If you never had a baby the first year there's something wrong with you. Now they don't ask you because for a year, two years they want to wait. They don't ask you now because they know. That's one good thing, at least that's a different attitude.'

(Pakistani woman in her 40s)

Attitudes of this kind towards having children were reported less often from women who had arrived in the UK from abroad straight after marrying or in order to marry. Women who were born in the UK could sometimes be subject to a different set of expectations from their families regarding marriage and children,

compared to those who had grown up in Bangladesh or Pakistan, with second generation women being given more flexibility around when to have children than their first generation counterparts:

'My husband, his brother got married last year in Bangladesh to one of his relatives and when she got married my mother-in-law expected her to have a baby straight away yet she doesn't expect the same from me. She knew I wanted to study and have a career. She doesn't expect that from me because I was brought up here.'

(Bangladeshi woman in her 20s)

3.3 Caring for children

This section explores women's attitudes towards parenting and their experience of childcare. We will look first at which qualities women felt made a good parent, before turning to look at the practicalities of childcare, and the extent to which attitudes about childcare are changing.

3.3.1 Good parenting

A wide variety of qualities were associated with being a good parent. These included:

- understanding children;
- spending time with your children;
- being a positive role model;
- gaining a good education so that you can educate your children;
- helping your children gain a good education;
- keeping children clean and healthy;
- instilling religious beliefs and cultural values;
- the ability to let go of your children as they get older and allow them to make their own decisions.

The following quotes illustrate the qualities and values which some of the women interviewed felt made a good parent:

'It's understanding your child's needs and doing what's right for them.'

(Pakistani woman in her 30s)

'If I think about my parents, they're supposed to love each other and look after each other. A role model for their children. I think that's good parents. They become a good model for the children.'

(Pakistani woman in her 30s)

'Give them a good education so they can get good jobs and get married to good families.'

(Pakistani woman in her 50s)

'You have to spend quality time together. Give the children more time. Play with them. Take them out. They need to be more confident. I wasn't that confident.'

(Pakistani woman in her 20s)

'Somebody who gives of their time and themselves. It's about the time you give your children. I look back on my childhood and we don't remember the material things. The thing I remember is not getting any time with my parents.'

(Bangladeshi woman in her 40s)

Overall, women enjoyed the experience of motherhood, although they also said that it was hard work and could sometimes be stressful.

3.3.2 Childcare

Views on childcare were similar for those with and without children, although those with children had to have a more pragmatic approach based upon their situation. Among those who had children, use of formal childcare was quite uncommon. Staying at home with children, and the use of informal childcare was more prevalent, especially when the children were young.

Staying at home with children

There was a diverse range of views on whether women should stay home with their children. Some women didn't make a decision to stay at home with their children, but it was assumed they would do so. This was particularly the case for first generation women, who had often come from abroad to marry (or shortly after being married). This was often an expectation from family members and very often an active choice of the woman herself (although most commonly a combination of these). Many women reported that they would feel guilty if they left their child or children or would worry that someone else could not meet the needs of their child, especially when they were very young:

'Muslim culture is to stay home, clean and look after the kids.'

(Bangladeshi woman in her 50s)

'Now I'm young and I've got this energy I want to work. When I have children I don't want to work. I don't believe in leaving children in crèche or relatives or friends and going to work. When I have children I want to stop working and spend all my time with the children, give them my best ability and time.'

(Pakistani woman in her 20s)

According to many of the women in this study, it was very common for women to want to stay at home with their child when they were very young. It was seen as important to spend time bonding with your child and then consider a return to work when the child reached nursery or school age. Many of those with older children had returned to work:

'I'm very decided about that. I really don't want to work. I'd like to take a sabbatical for the duration of time I have kids. When the kids reach a certain level they don't want their mum to be home all the time. That's when I'd like to get out of the house and find work.'

(Bangladeshi woman in her 20s)

'If I had children I think what I would do is probably, I think I would rather spend more time with my children than considering work. Maybe when they were bigger and gone to school and settled in their own lives then I would consider going to work, but in the first few years, until they're four or five, I would not put them in care.'

(Pakistani woman in her 20s)

'I wouldn't leave them at a very young age. Up until two or three I'd like to be able to look after them. That's the most important part of a child's life. That's when they're developing and I'd like to be there to see them crawl, say their first word, as opposed to a child minder.'

(Pakistani woman in her 20s)

Overall, younger women who were born in the UK tended to feel that it was or would be possible to combine work and family life, particularly as their children got older. Furthermore, in some cases it was seen as a financial necessity:

'I think everyone's helping out now, doing different jobs. You probably see women and men working and leaving the kids in nurseries or with parents. A lot of women are working now even with children. People have taken out mortgages these days and have to pay them back so they're both working.'

(Pakistani woman in her 20s)

A few women were very keen to combine work with caring for their children, especially if they could find part-time work. They wanted to improve their financial situation and gain some independence. This was often supported or encouraged by family members, but not always. In a minority of cases it was felt that it was not acceptable for women to work if they had children, or that this would not be supported by their family and/or husband:

'That was a part-time job but it gave me a bit of independence, a bit of financial support as well for myself. Didn't go down too well with the in-laws but I think that was me. I was going to be assertive and I did what I wanted to do.'

(Pakistani woman in her 30s)

'I would like to work but I'd like to fit it in around my children. I'd like to go back part-time. I wouldn't go back full-time. I need to spend time with my children.'

(Pakistani woman in her 20s)

Informal childcare

As mentioned previously, the use of informal childcare was fairly common among those in our study who had children. Most commonly, informal childcare was found with mothers or mothers-in-law but also with sisters, aunts and sometimes friends. There did seem to be some expectation that female relatives would help with childcare, and often they were keen to help. However, it was felt that this expectation was starting to change. Some women expressed a view that they wanted to give their relatives a break, or not burden them with their children:

'Yes, it is expected that elder women in the family help out with childcare but as I've learnt now, I think that if it came to my grandchildren and I was asked to help out I'd be a bit selfish.'

(Pakistani woman in her 30s)

'My in-laws were all right to look after the kids. Some people won't. They say "look after your own kids". In some ways it's understandable.'

(Pakistani woman in her 20s)

'If I really want to work I would put them in childcare, I don't want to put a burden on my family.'

(Pakistani woman in her 20s)

'My mum said, "you can leave him and I'll look after him" but she's got her own work to do. I don't want to dump on her. He's quite small and teething. Too young.'

(Pakistani woman in her 20s)

Many respondents felt that husbands were taking a more active part in looking after their children, which meant that their mothers had more freedom to work. However, childcare was still predominantly seen as a woman's responsibility in practice. In only one case had the father been the main carer of the child:

'Primarily the woman, me, because I'm at home with the kids. My husband can't feed the kids. He can't take over the role of a mother - it's impossible. Naturally, it's the mother most of the time. The father can help but there's only so much they can do. It's the mother who has the natural instinct.'

(Pakistani woman in her 20s)

'In an ideal world it would be both, a shared responsibility. You can't dump everything on one person. I wouldn't be able to sit down while somebody tells me this is how the money's going to be spent and this is how the kids are going to be looked after. I'd like it to be equal.'

(Pakistani woman in her 20s)

It did seem that where informal childcare was available, usually from immediate or extended family, it was the preference for women who were working mothers. It also seemed the most popular future option for those who had not yet had children. The main reasons were that women felt that their child would be safe and with someone they knew well, which they would not feel if their child was cared for by strangers. Spending time with family also meant that the child was still within their own culture which was often seen as beneficial. It was also felt to be much cheaper than formal childcare. Some women who used informal childcare did think that their child might learn more in formal childcare, and would learn more social skills but overall the preference was for the family environment, which they felt was safer:

'I think she wouldn't get the attention because there would be so many other kids and he [husband] feels the same as well. He says no. You hear so many stories and I would not leave her anywhere with somebody I don't know.'

(Pakistani woman in her 30s)

'I just feel that she'll pick up stuff that is not relevant to us. When she's with my mum she's talking in Punjabi and to me that is a great part of her culture.'

(Pakistani woman in her 30s)

'You hear of children going into childcare. You don't know how they will look after them, a totally different person. I don't know how they will teach my kid, how they'll bring them up, that type of thing. She's too young. My mum knows how I look after her, how I expect her to be brought up. She'll do exactly what I will do.'

(Pakistani woman in her 20s)

'It would be better [to use family] because I wouldn't pay as much.'

(Pakistani woman in her teens)

'If I have to work then I trust my family and leave my children with them. I wouldn't trust anybody else.'

(Pakistani woman in her 20s)

Some women would like to have used informal childcare but it was not available. In fact, the availability of informal childcare seemed crucial in some cases to whether a mother felt she was able to return to work, for both ideological and/or financial reasons:

'I need to get out and see the world. I've only got two kids and I've got somebody to look after them so it's alright. If I didn't have anybody to look after them I probably wouldn't be able to work....I don't earn enough to start paying for childcare.'

(Pakistani woman in her 20s)

'When I was working my child didn't go to nursery. My mother had her. Without the support I had from my mother there's no way I could have managed to work. It wouldn't have been financially viable.'

(Bangladeshi woman in her 40s)

'Preferably I'd leave him with my mum. If she wasn't there I don't think I'd be thinking about work until after he'd gone to nursery.'

(Pakistani woman in her 20s)

'The only reason I'd work is because my parents are here so I can leave her with my mum. I won't leave her in a nursery. That's probably a reason I'd be able to go because I can leave her with my mum.'

(Pakistani woman in her 20s)

Formal childcare

Few of the women we interviewed had used formal childcare. In general, women preferred to look after their own children or rely on family members to help with childcare, although quite a few were open to the idea in principle. Some were clear that it would never be an option for them. Younger women were more open to the idea of using formal childcare, but factors such as cost and availability were an issue. Cost was seen as a barrier to accessing childcare, especially for women who would, as a result of their skills and experience, probably be looking for fairly low-paid work:

'I wouldn't really use nurseries, they cost too much...I don't earn enough to start paying for childcare.'

(Pakistani woman in her 20s)

'I used to send him to nursery but it is £90 a week. It was very expensive and I thought there is no point in me coming to work. I only do five hours a day so what is the point of doing that.'

(Pakistani woman in her 30s)

Positive aspects of using formal childcare were that children would learn more than in the family environment, they would learn to mix with other children before starting school and would develop independence:

'When I was working, and they were with the child minder it was actually quite productive because they used to enjoy time away from me doing things, mixing with other children and having a different environment. Then they'd come back quite excited and tell you things that happened. I thought that was a good thing.'

(Pakistani woman in her 30s)

'What they've given her [at the Children's Centre] I don't think I could have given her that. The way her personality is, the things she knows and she's learned. It's amazing. Even my family sees that as well.'

(Pakistani woman in her 20s)

'I'm quite happy with that because the children they're more, they know how to sit down, how to mix with other children. I think that's a very good idea. I know you can teach them at home but it's not the same. Up there it's different, they learn more.'

(Pakistani woman in her 50s)

Some women used, or said they would use, nurseries and seemed to be a lot more open to this than the idea of using a childminder. Children in nurseries were seen as being safer. Nurseries were felt to have more rigorous procedures and trained staff, while childminders were felt to provide a less secure environment for a child. However, in one case a childminder was preferred:

'I would trust childcare as long as it is in a nursery. Not in a private home. In a private home anybody can come. In my childcare course I needed childcare and I left her at nursery and I trusted them because they were all females. I wouldn't like it to be males. I have heard so much about private homes, how they have physically and verbally abused the children.'

(Pakistani woman in her 30s)

'Just to leave them at someone's home, even if it was a registered childminder I'd find it very difficult. I don't mind it in a nursery setting, the environment in a nursery is different from somebody's home.'

(Pakistani woman in her 30s)

A few women had used a crèche when they had visited a local centre to complete short informal courses. These were viewed positively as their children were close by and mothers could keep an eye on them. Also, they tended to get to know the people who were looking after their children, and often the centres had all female staff. Most women did not have much information about childcare that

was available locally, mainly because they hadn't looked into it. A few had been in contact with their local Sure Start office which was spoken of very positively.

Those women who had considered or had used formal childcare placed importance on a variety of issues. The primary concern was the safety of their children. Some saw culturally specific childcare as very important. They preferred their children to mix with children from similar cultural backgrounds so that they could practice their language skills, and be taught in line with religious beliefs. Food was important too, and some were concerned that their children would not eat Halal food if they were in a mixed childcare environment. Others thought the opposite of this, that being in a mixed cultural environment was important for their child to learn English and mix with children of different backgrounds in order to prepare them for mainstream culture. This was often a difficult area for parents who tried to balance the two. A lot of mothers preferred the workers in formal childcare to be female:

'Some women don't like it, especially proper really strict Muslims. They don't like them to go somewhere else, they'd rather look after their own child. It's also the food problem. Muslims use Halal meat and in their mind they think they are going to have another meat.'

(Pakistani woman in her 50s)

'The more of a mix they get, they learn different stuff.'

(Pakistani woman in her 20s)

Changing attitudes?

Changes in attitudes towards childcare and paid work were less striking than the changes in attitudes towards marriage and having children. It was still the norm in the wider community for women to stay home with their children, particularly before they started school, and many of the women interviewed agreed with this. However, it was seen as increasingly possible, or desirable, to combine family and work as children got older. Some of the younger women who had not yet had children said that they would consider working and using formal childcare, although there was still a preference to leave children with family members if possible. There was also the view that while some women wanted to work whilst their children were growing up, their husbands wanted them to stay at home and look after the children:

'I think it [paid work] is still seen as negative but it is changing slowly. People are more involved in their child's education and finding out more for their children. When I go to schools and family centres I see a lot of family learning going on and I can see it has started to make an impact. The only thing I find is with men it's hard, for them the woman's place is at home with the children. Most women do want to go out and do something for themselves.'

(Pakistani woman in her 20s)

When women were asked about the role their own mothers had taken in their upbringing, the outcomes were interesting. All the respondents said that their mother had been their main carer when they were a child and very few of their mothers had done any paid work. The younger women (ie those in their 30s and below) who had children, generally felt that their experience of motherhood was very different to that of their own mothers. They had fewer children, tended to be better off financially and were more likely to work. Their own mothers were commonly felt to have spent all or most of their time looking after the family, cooking and cleaning.

3.4 Caring responsibilities

This section looks at other caring responsibilities aside from those of caring for children. Most of the women respondents did not have experience of caring for adults. However, there were a small number of women who either had current caring responsibilities for members of their family or had cared for relatives who had since passed away. Those who had cared for an older family member who was ill had been a range of ages when they did so – from their teens and 20s through to their 40s and 50s. The most usual examples of other caring responsibilities given by respondents were caring for parents and parents-in-law.

3.4.1 Who is responsible for care?

Women of all educational levels, whether currently in or out of work, largely believed that should a family member fall ill they would be at least partly responsible for caring for them. There was a shared view that caring for family members was a woman's responsibility and typically this was regardless of whether the adult who needed care was direct family or an in-law. A number of the women mentioned that they cared for their older relatives because this is how they would want to be treated, and in turn they expected that they would be looked after by family in their old age. Among those women who had been carers, and the expectations of women who had not done so, there was largely an agreement that the eldest female sibling would primarily be responsible.

One Pakistani woman in her 30s (the eldest female child in the family) described how she left school at 16 to care for her mother who suffered from depression while her younger sister went on to university:

'Because I was the oldest, though I had two older brothers I was considered the oldest...it was different. It wasn't a matter of moving onto education, the priority was the family. I was needed.'

The woman now lived with her husband and four children. She volunteered in an Asian Women's Group and had returned to part-time study since her children were school age.

However, there were some examples of the youngest or the unmarried female siblings taking care of family members, and some instances where it was anticipated that responsibility would be shared between siblings.

A Bangladeshi woman in her 20s whose father was ill was asked whether her family members expected her to look after her father and explained:

'I think because I am the youngest and my three sisters are all married...I think because they are all married they have excuses, they don't need to and I think my dad expects it as well. If you have a husband you're basically doing things with them.'

Generally, it was felt that married women were responsible for the care of in-laws, although there were exceptions to this.

One Bangladeshi woman in her 40s described the traditional view that the wife of the eldest son would be responsible for any care of adults, although this woman's family (consisting of two brothers and two sisters) were planning to share the responsibility to care for their elderly mother:

'There's an overall expectation that families look out for each other so I am incredibly close with my family ... but the bigger responsibility, traditionally, in terms of looking after the parents falls with the eldest son [if he was married].'

A Bangladeshi woman in her 20s described how more traditional Bangladeshi men married women from Bangladesh and said:

'The girl would come over and look after the parents so it was sort of like bought care, purchased care.'

However, she felt that the extent to which this happened depended on the class of the family, which in turn affected the expectations of daughters-in-law and the extent of control that was exerted by the family.

While these traditional views were rejected by some women (for example, one woman expected her husband to look after his parents and that she would look after hers) other young women reported that they would assume the traditional role of caring for their husband's parents. Asked if she would have any responsibility for her boyfriend's parents when they got married, one young woman replied:

'Oh definitely. I'd really look after them. That's my responsibility because I am the daughter-in-law. It's like I am part of them now.'

(Pakistani woman in her 20s)

3.4.2 Where does care take place?

The women talked about expectations that older parents would come and live with their family, to be cared for in the family home. One woman discussed the community expectation that families would care for older people in their family home and that where this did not happen, it hurt the reputation of the family. There was little mention of purchased care and care homes as an option for the care of elderly relatives, although one woman mentioned it in a negative context:

'It would be difficult for a woman to work because she needs to be at home to look after them [older relatives]. Some people put them into nursing homes, that's their choice, but I don't think it's very nice, after having your parents look after you for so long, then to plonk them into the nursing home.'

(Pakistani woman in her 20s)

The majority view was that care for adults would take place in the family home, although one woman discussed a particular day-care centre, which was culturally compatible, as a possible option:

'The day-care centre is Bengali speaking...the person can go there from 9am to 4pm and you can come home from work at 1pm. I do not think it is a problem...and the person caring for them is quite trained and qualified.'

(Bangladeshi woman in her 50s)

There were a small number of instances where respondents said that because their parents had enjoyed independence throughout their life, they did not want to move into their children's home, and wanted to maintain independence for as long as possible.

3.4.3 Impact of caring

The impact of eldercare on carers depended on the extent of support that relatives needed and whether the illness was short- or long-term. Those women who had cared for members of their family had sometimes taken time out from study in order to do this. One woman deferred starting university, and another did not apply for work experience in an opticians (her degree subject) during the summer break because she didn't feel she could work the required hours and look after her ill mother. She felt that this lack of experience has since disadvantaged her in applying for graduate jobs.

One young Bangladeshi woman in her 20s took a year out between the second and final year of her degree to care for her mother. She said of her decision:

'I'm not going to just leave them, studying can wait really, it is only a year.'

Consequently, she lost her group of friends at university as they proceeded with their studies. However, she returned to university after a year at home and after graduating found employment in the civil service. She described how her father is now beginning to need more support and how she goes home to him every other weekend in order to do his shopping and cooking. Care for him was likely to become a greater issue in the future.

3.4.4 Changing attitudes?

The women who had cared for adults in their family usually reported consequences which showed that this had a substantial impact on their lives. According to these women, caring for adults (whether direct family or in-laws) seems to largely remain the responsibility of women in the family and this did not appear to be changing. However, among some older people who have had independent lives there may be some reluctance to be cared for by family members and they were reported to want to retain their independence.

3.5 Domestic responsibilities

This section looks at how domestic responsibilities are shared between women and men, typically within a marriage.

3.5.1 Responsibility for domestic duties

Many women said that they shared domestic responsibilities with their husband or that they planned to do so when they were married. Others reported that general domestic duties were carried out by female members of the household, although there were examples of 'male domestic tasks', such as putting out the household rubbish. Men were most often seen as being the primary breadwinner, although there were examples of women earning more than their husbands. The traditional view of women being in the home and having responsibility for its upkeep was discussed by some women, some of whom held these beliefs. For example:

'I'm a housewife, we stay at home, we cook, we clean, and that's what we do...Muslim culture is to stay at home, clean and look after the kids.'

(Bangladeshi woman in her 50s)

'In an Islamic way I believe that husband's responsibility is earning money, doing the work outside. Women's responsibility is more inside – family, children, housework.'

(Bangladeshi woman in her 50s)

However, while the traditional view of women as home-makers was still reported, there was evidence to suggest that this had been changing and the majority of women said that they either shared domestic responsibilities with their husband or expected to do so if they got married. Equally, many also wanted to share responsibility for income earning:

'They [women] used to stay at home. Their job was to look after the house, the kids, the husband. Now, it's changing. Women want to meet people and do a job and stand on their feet.'

(Pakistani woman in her 40s)

'In the rural areas the old conventions still work because the ladies are at home and the men go out and work on their farming. I think, that way, it's fine if the woman's cooking, but otherwise I think trends have shifted. Nobody expects the woman to cook all the time.'

(Bangladeshi woman in her 20s)

Women with higher levels of qualifications (at degree level or higher) were more likely than women with no, or some lower level, qualifications to say that they shared (or would share) the domestic responsibilities with their husband.

3.5.2 The impact of technology

A shift towards domestic tasks being more equally divided between women and men was in part attributed to technological advances and the increasing use of labour saving devices in the home. Many of the women referred to the labour intensiveness of the domestic tasks which their mothers had done, such as hand-washing, cooking, and typically caring for larger numbers of children. For previous generations these tasks would have been very time-consuming, but with the aid of technology and household machines these tasks were now undertaken more quickly and were seen as less of a full-time role.

3.5.3 The impact of women working outside the home

Amongst the respondents, the women in employment often reported that they shared domestic tasks with their husbands, whilst women who were not working often said that domestic tasks were their sole responsibility. Among those who were not working, those who were studying (for example, for a first degree or masters degree) or those who were undertaking volunteer work were the most likely in the non-working group to say that domestic responsibilities were or would be shared. However, it seemed that gaining paid employment could be the critical influence in the sharing of household tasks:

'Usually in our culture it's women, women, women. My husband always helps me if he's home...since I started working outside we started to share.'

(Pakistani woman in her 30s)

Only a small minority of women still expected that they would have to carry out all the domestic duties even if they worked. There were some comments that a woman's role in Pakistan was more home-based and that the opportunities in the UK meant that women were able to work, although this was taking time to become acceptable in the more traditional elements of the community.

One Bangladeshi woman in her 20s felt that expectations of who would undertake domestic responsibilities and whether or not a wife worked were influenced by class and ability to find work in the UK (for example, by being able to speak English and having relevant skills and qualifications). She felt that families from a lower class were more likely to want their women to stay at home and not to work. To some extent, whether or not a woman took primary responsibility for the home and domestic duties depended on whether they wanted to and whether they could find suitable employment.

3.5.4 Hiring domestic assistance

A few of the women talked about the role of cleaners and hired domestic workers who helped them to balance their work with family and domestic commitments. One woman who was working, but felt strongly that the home and family were a woman's responsibility, described how she hired a cleaner to help her balance both work and domestic responsibilities:

'Even though I'm working outside I go home and I do my own housework. I keep a helper because I'm earning money and I'm enjoying my life, but at the same time I need to do the housework. I cannot tell my husband to Hoover. I employ someone to do the cleaning.'

(Bangladeshi woman in her 50s)

3.5.5 The influence of a husband

The influence and understanding of a woman's husband and his willingness to contribute to the running of the household were critically important for many women. Some reported that their husband was supportive and undertook a greater or lesser proportion of the household duties. Other women reported that their husband viewed domestic tasks solely as a woman's responsibility. One Pakistani woman in her mid-30s wished her husband would help her around the house, but said that:

'He is an Asian guy so that would never happen...he says, "why bark yourself when you have a dog".'

(Pakistani woman in her 30s)

Another described how her husband, whom she had recently separated from, would try to push their children into traditional gender roles, encouraging their daughter to cook and clean. A Bangladeshi woman in her 50s described how she felt attitudes towards domestic responsibilities and work had been changing among women, but that many men still held traditional views:

'They have to be like the English and doing everything, earning money at the same time, cooking, cleaning, everything has to be shared. Bangladeshi girls nowadays thinking, but Bangladeshi boys are not thinking this way.'

(Bangladeshi woman in her 50s)

3.5.6 Changing attitudes?

There seemed to be some change between generations in terms of the extent to which domestic responsibilities were shared, particularly as more younger women of both Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin are working. One Pakistani woman in her late 20s described how community expectations towards domestic duties were changing and becoming more balanced:

'They're starting to understand that it's not like you have to do it different, it's a choice between us [the husband and wife].'

(Pakistani woman in her 20s)

There appeared to be a range of views amongst husbands regarding the extent to which they are willing to help with domestic duties; from those who were willing to share responsibility, to those who believed that women should take care of the domestic tasks, while men were responsible for earning money outside the home. Women who said that they shared domestic duties with their husbands still felt that they were relatively unusual within their community, and that in the majority of couples the woman still undertook most or all of the domestic tasks.

3.6 Leisure and socialising

This section covers leisure time and socialising, including the influences which come to bear on how and where women socialise, the differences between women in the UK and the homeland, what women themselves would like, and the extent to which attitudes are changing.

3.6.1 Influences on women's leisure and socialising

Women reported a tendency for older generations to socialise among family and within the home. However, socialising with family remained very important for many of the younger women too. One woman described how family always came first and any plans she made with friends needed to be rearranged if a family commitment came up. Parents, husbands and the wider community all influenced women's socialising, some positively, but most often restricting what they could and couldn't do. Most women said they wanted to be able to socialise more frequently.

Parental influence

It was mentioned by a number of the younger unmarried women that parents and older family members often restricted how they spent their leisure time, and also where they could meet friends. For example, one woman described how her

grandfather did not want her and her friend going to the cinema to see a film. Instead, he preferred them to watch a film at home. Another woman said:

'We weren't allowed to go out because my father was quite strict. We were within the house, so you never really have much of a social life.'

(Pakistani woman in her 40s)

Parental influence could still be substantial for women well into their 20s; for example, a Pakistani woman aged 28 worked full-time and lived with her parents and extended family. She socialised with friends and work colleagues within the confines of her beliefs.

'At work I have Western culture but there's also my grounding in the East. We'll go out for a meal with work colleagues, that's about as far as it goes. I know the rest of the Western culture I wouldn't do, going out to clubs, drinking, anything like that.'

She reported that her mum felt socialising was a 'waste of time'. She wanted to go out with her friends, and so on occasions she had lied about where she was going to avoid conflict. She said she would like to be able to socialise with friends more openly.

The influence of husbands

Husbands appeared to be very influential in whether or not women were able to socialise, in some cases taking over the role of parents in restricting women's socialising. While some husbands were supportive, looking after the children when their wife went out with friends, others were suspicious and controlling. One woman described how her husband would always question her whenever she went out, even if she was simply going out to do the family shopping.

A Pakistani woman in her early 30s said that she largely mixed with her family, but when she did see friends her husband did not like her going to her friend's house by herself. Instead he would take her there and collect her. She preferred people coming to see her in her own home as this was easier, but admitted:

'I don't mix with many people.'

In contrast to this, there were also examples where women (including some who were married) said they were able to socialise freely outside the home:

'Compared to the Asian girls here I am quite forward...I go out like the other girls do, English girls I mean...we have the life of Riley because on Saturday we will go out...and we just say to the husband that we are going and he is fine. My husband has given me that one day in the week that is yours and you can do whatever you want with that.'

(Pakistani woman in her 30s)

Community expectations

The expectations of the community were also reported to act as a perceived pressure on women, in terms of how often and where they socialised.

One Bangladeshi woman in her 20s felt that the pressure came because many of the older generation had lived in villages where there was little to do in the evening. She said that they therefore thought that:

'Nothing good can be done outside the home after a certain time.'

The woman felt this attitude was difficult to understand among the younger generation, particularly in a city like London.

A Bangladeshi woman in her 20s described a time when neighbours had warned her parents that she was socialising with a male friend and said it was very important to 'keep face' within the community and not to be seen to be socialising in an unacceptable way. This woman felt that the community was becoming more divided between people who have a more Western view of socialising and others who still held traditional views.

3.6.2 Mixing in 'safe' places

Family homes were frequently mentioned as a place where women would socialise and this was most acceptable to other members of the community. Pressure for women to socialise in 'safe' settings could come from the community, husbands and parents. These 'safe' settings were seen as places where women's contact with unknown people would be very limited.

Many of the women we interviewed discussed the role and importance that Asian women's centres in the community have played in enabling women to socialise outside the home. For several of the women we interviewed (particularly the older women), Asian women's centres were the hub of their social life, where they met and where they could learn skills such as English language and sewing. These centres were less likely to be mentioned as a place to socialise by working women who through their work already spent considerable amounts of time outside the home and with non-family members.

3.6.3 Differences between UK and homeland

Two younger women who had recently spent time in Pakistan or Bangladesh described the differences between the pressures and constraints that UK women find themselves under with regard to socialising, and the situation of young women in their parents' home countries. They both reported that traditions and values had continued to evolve in Pakistan and Bangladesh and had become more moderate and in line with Western views, enabling women to mix with others outside the family more openly. In contrast to this, they felt that in the UK, their communities still largely held onto the traditional values they had brought with

them from the homeland when they had migrated to the UK many years ago. One young Pakistani woman who had recently finished a degree and had spent time in Pakistan said:

'A lot of people in Pakistan are changing...they seem more modern...over here we wouldn't talk openly to males as a cultural thing. Over there it was normal. Male friends would come over and it was totally normal...I think the people that came here from Pakistan 50 years ago brought their values here and they taught them to their children so their children still have the same kind of thing – no mixing. Over there [in Pakistan] they've developed and become more modern and to them it doesn't really matter.'

(Pakistani woman in her 20s)

Another woman described a recent Ede event in Trafalgar Square which she attended and noted the difference between the celebration and those she had attended in Bangladesh:

'There were no women singing or dancing, everyone was covered up, there weren't any girls not wearing a scarf, all the performers were male and it was about singing to about God...whereas when I went to [the events in] Bangladesh we were singing about romance and fun stuff.'

(Bangladeshi woman in her 20s)

3.6.4 Changing attitudes?

The extent to which women mixing and socialising was accepted by their families and their immediate community seems to be quite polarised. Some women reported being able to socialise with friends with the support of their husbands, while others were not able to socialise outside the home. Some women socialised with friends outside their family in an open way, others were limited by what their husband and/or immediate community expected of them. However, there was some feeling that this was changing between generations.

Some of the women noted the differences between Pakistani and Bangladeshi culture in the UK and that of their homelands, with UK culture towards socialising not having changed to the same extent. They felt the attitudes towards socialising among Pakistanis and Bangladeshis in the UK were more strict and traditional than their homeland.

In response to being asked about their daily routines and whether or not they were happy with them, a large proportion of the women (of all ages) responded that they would like to spend more time socialising. This was the case among women who had children and those who did not, and among those who were married and those who were not.

One Pakistani woman in her 40s, whose husband questioned her whenever she went out said:

'Sometimes you can have a wee chit chat and it makes me feel better, if you're laughing at a wee joke. I could have more of this. I'd love to have more of this.'

4 Education and work

This chapter explores women's attitudes towards education and work. It covers:

- the respondents' education histories and qualifications;
- their experiences of, and attitudes towards, employment;
- their perceived barriers to employment;
- respondents' career aspirations;
- their experience of self-employment.

4.1 Education

This section discusses different levels of education and qualification in turn, before considering women's attitudes towards the role and value of education in their lives.

4.1.1 Those with no qualifications

Only nine of our 60 respondents reported that they had no qualifications. The age range of these nine women varied widely, although none were in their teens. Most were first generation migrants, ie they were not born in the UK and some spoke little or no English. Most were also married, and the husband was the main provider. Almost all stated that they had attended some English classes such as ESOL, and the few who arrived in the UK more recently were still attending English classes and expressed a desire to learn more English.

Older women who spoke little or no English said that they relied on their family members for help with a range of activities such as attending a doctor's appointment, and their husbands or grown up children often dropped them off at the places they needed to go to. They stressed that they had very little independence outside the home. They complained about bad health and also expressed concerns that they were being a burden to their children as they had to rely on them for so much. They also saw the contrast between their own lives and those of their children, who had much more freedom. For example, a Bangladeshi woman in her 50s said:

'I can't go anywhere but my children can do what they want. I am also a burden to them. I keep telling them come and take me to the hospital, I have got this problem, I have pain. All these problems I have, I am a burden to them.'

Apart from language courses, there were also those who had been attending other short-term courses. Childcare and classroom assistant courses were mentioned by some of the women, and courses on Asian garment construction and secretarial studies were also reported. The women who had been attending courses tended to be in their 20s or 30s, and they often mentioned how useful these courses were in terms of gaining confidence:

'It is nice to be learning new things...some females just sit in the house and do nothing but I think you should do something that is worthwhile. Make yourself useful. Gives you a bit of confidence as well. I did enjoy doing the course. It gave me a bit more confidence but I feel I have a lot to learn for my own confidence.'

(Pakistani woman in her 30s)

Respondents' family circumstances and parents' attitudes seemed to have played an important part in whether or not they continued with their education. Some of the women with no qualifications, especially slightly older women who had been born in the UK, said that they had had a bad time at school. They had not had any guidance on education from their parents, and these two factors together meant that they did not want to, or could not, carry on with their studies. As a second generation Pakistani woman in her 40s said:

'There was no-one there to guide us. Dad didn't encourage us. I think if my mum would have been alive, because she always wanted us to educate ourselves and my sister did go to college to be a medical secretary, but then she had to leave six months before because she was going to get married... and then I got bullied at school. When I was in the first and second year because I couldn't stick up for myself. I just used to take it and that was quite a big part of going to school. Then I knew I had to go but didn't tell my family. Things like that.'

For some, it was also more to do with the choices or decisions made for them. They felt that these choices, made by parents and mostly by fathers, were not the right ones and that they held them back. Some women with no qualifications said that they had had very traditional parents; their father thought that a woman's place was in the home and did not believe in girls having education, and their mother had little influence over this. These women felt that the way they had been brought up was a big barrier in terms of engaging with educational opportunities and having careers:

'My father sent me to a Muslim school. I didn't want to go to that school. I wanted to go to a mainstream school. It was a very strict school and was all about religion. I feel that I've not been given physics, biology, chemistry and all that. This school was just basic English, basic maths, Urdu and religion. I feel that if you have to stay in this country you need the basics, or wherever you stay...I felt deprived. Then I went to college but my English was not good.'

(Pakistani woman in her 30s)

Although these women felt that they were themselves held back in terms of having formal qualifications, they all seemed to be in agreement that this was no longer the case and that there was a real shift in attitudes towards valuing education. They were encouraging their children (especially their daughters) to get a good education and to go to college or university. In fact, almost all respondents who had children of higher education age, sons as well as daughters, reported that their children were either in college or university studying for various qualifications.

4.1.2 Those with some qualifications

In all, 36 women in our sample held some qualifications below degree level. GCSEs, NVQs (Level 1, 2 or 3), and 'A' levels were mentioned most often, although a few women had obtained HND, BTEC and City and Guilds qualifications. Some respondents had also done vocational qualifications or training in education/teaching. Childcare, health and social care were particularly popular subjects, although some had taken courses on administration and business studies courses which led to vocational qualifications.

The influence of family circumstances and parents' or partners' attitudes towards education was clearly strong amongst those who held some qualifications. In some cases, women had decided to go back to education later in life to study for some qualifications that they could not do before due to their circumstances.

A Pakistani woman in her 30s had been married but was now divorced. She was now employed and said of her educational opportunities when she was younger:

'I wanted to do A' levels but college wasn't an accepted environment at that time, because there was too much freedom, and you have got to be protected, you shouldn't be going in there and you don't need to because you're married and your husband is the provider...I was very frustrated that I couldn't do what I wanted to. Now it's taken me so many years to go back and do what I should have done then. I was resentful that I didn't have control of what I wanted to do.'

For some women, although they left education earlier than they had planned to due to family circumstances, the employment they found was enjoyable and

satisfying enough for them not to have too many regrets. Again, these decisions were heavily influenced by parents' advice and guidance.

A second generation Pakistani woman aged 21 had experienced a number of family changes, including her own marriage in Pakistan when she was 20, followed by a death in her family, both of which appeared to have played a big part in her subsequent education decisions. She was now in full-time employment but in a less challenging job than she would have liked. She hoped to work her way up in the company over time:

'At 17 I was expecting to go to university and maybe get a degree in something. It was mainly broadcasting or public relations and that was my main route but then I went to Pakistan. I came back and things just changed dramatically. My gran passed away and I got the first job...I took that trip to Pakistan everything changed. I could have gone to university.'

Another Pakistani woman in her 30s explained that her family had also shaped her education path and her employment outcomes. However, she was now married and in a job which she was happy in:

'Yes, I did have plans. I wanted to be a social worker, I wanted to go to university but when I was 18 and I had just left school I had got a place in Birmingham University and my dad had a stroke, I decided not to go.'

She explained that when she went to tell the university that she had decided not to take up her place, she was told by a university staff member that there was a 13 week period during which time she could change her mind. She was then asked if she would like to work there during that time:

'So I spoke to my dad and my dad said, "even if you've got qualifications, what makes you so sure that you'll get a job at the end, whereas now, you've this good job". And then I got my permanent position then after that promotion came up. It's just been like that ever since.'

The interviews with these women also showed that when family circumstances were given as a reason for them to leave education, this would have the most impact on the eldest daughter of the family. (The key role of the eldest daughter was also highlighted in previous sections; 3.4 on caring responsibilities, and 3.1.4 on changing attitudes to marriage.)

'We had lots of things in the family, my mum was having lots of problems. There was my younger sister and myself and because I was the oldest, though I had two older brothers, I was considered the oldest, more responsible. I left school when I was 16, my sister is younger than I am. She went to university, she is an accountant. It was different. It wasn't a matter of moving onto education, the priority of things within the family. I was needed.'

(Pakistani woman in her 30s)

Respondents were often quite divided in their views about education, and their views seemed to be heavily influenced by the attitudes and socio-economic backgrounds of their family. Although education was almost always very highly regarded by these women, for some its direct link to employment, rather than its academic value, was much more important. They tended to be more in favour of studying for vocational qualifications which would help them into paid employment as quickly as possible. They were often from families where their parents were struggling financially and although they wanted their children to get a good education, they also needed their financial support. Therefore, these women often chose to do vocational qualifications in courses such as business administration or childcare as they believed that these courses would guarantee them employment. Most of these women were of second generation:

'I just wish I could carry on studying. When your family is on low income it puts you off. You have the support but you need money. My dad is not fit to work and my mum is a housewife. She is not well to work. Even though we are five brothers and sisters, we cannot rely on parents to support us financially...without a job you can't do anything, you need money. I am going to save up a bit to do a course. I am just working four days so I'm sure there are evening courses I could go to.'

(Bangladeshi woman in her 20s)

Women with some qualifications also tended to focus more on the value of education in terms of its impact on their financial independence and being able to look after, and provide for, themselves if their husband could not or would not do this. (This will be discussed in more detail in Section 4.4 on attitudes to employment.)

4.1.3 Those with degree level qualifications

Fifteen women interviewed for this study reported having degree level qualifications or higher. Those who had degree level qualifications often held a postgraduate degree such as a Masters or a Postgraduate Diploma, with one woman having a PhD and another hoping to study for a PhD in the future. Most of those with degree level qualifications were in their 20s. Although many were second generation, some were first generation and some of these first generation migrants to the UK had obtained their degrees from Bangladesh or Pakistan.

The women with higher level degrees often said that their parents had passionately believed in ensuring their daughters had a good education. This was very much the case for those women who were of first generation and had obtained their degrees in their home country. It seems that these women were from families of a relatively high socio-economic background which had afforded them these opportunities in their home countries, and meant that their families intrinsically valued academic achievement for women as well as men. Some reported that their parents' strong desire for their daughters' education was not always necessarily with a view to obtaining employment but education in and for itself, and also for

what was still seen as women's most important role in life – motherhood. These highly educated women held a common viewpoint that educated mothers can pass on a better future to their children. In these cases, their parents were also highly educated. Their fathers usually held professional jobs such as a doctor, engineer or a lawyer. Their mothers had also worked before they had married or before having children, often as teachers. Two first generation Bangladeshi women, the first in her 40s, and the second in her 20s illustrate these points:

'Because it was all education, and the culture and family I'd come from, there was a separation of roles. You had to be educated but it wasn't necessarily with a purpose or a view to working. You became educated but ultimately the traditional boundaries was your husband would work and it's almost a buffer in case you need to work.'

'My mum did a Doctorate when I was born. She was studying it when she got married. She was 21 when she got married. She was in the midst of studying it and then she had to postpone it because she got married, then she had me after two years and then she completed it when I was five or six years old...she has proven herself earlier in marriage that she's capable of handling those things. If you talk about her family background, she's also grown up in a certain way. My grandfather brought her up in a certain way.'

In contrast, some of the women with degrees or higher qualifications said that their parents did not have any formal qualifications when they arrived in the UK. They had usually worked in manual jobs with low pay, often under rather poor work conditions. These parents felt strongly that their children should be as educated as possible so that their daughters could have a better future and a higher standard of living than they had had themselves. They often pointed out to their children that the very reason for their migration to the UK was for a better future for them, and had told their children that they did not want them to have to go through what they went through themselves by being stuck in low paid jobs with no future.

The influence of older siblings (especially sisters) in terms of their education also seemed to play a part in some women's choice in, or decision to continue with, education beyond school. Some stated that because their sisters were already in higher education when they were in their early teens, they made the assumption that this was what they would be doing as well. A second generation Bangladeshi woman in her 20s said of this:

'Because I have two older sisters who had followed that route [continuing with education], so they went to school, got qualifications and went to university. Whilst I was doing my GCSEs I had a sister who was at university, so I was thinking that was what I was going to do. I almost expected that path for me.'

4.1.4 Changing attitudes?

Most of the women interviewed for this research valued education very highly, whether they had had educational opportunities themselves or not, and regardless of their backgrounds in terms of age, generation, employment and marital status. Most said that they wanted a good education for their children. Those who were first generation and had migrated to the UK many years ago with no qualifications, said that their role as a wife and mother was what was expected of them by everyone they knew. They said that the opportunities and support for Pakistani and Bangladeshi women to challenge traditional ways had not been available to them as they perceived them to be now to younger women. Women with no qualifications who had migrated to the UK more recently tended to be younger and they were often encouraged to attend language courses by their families. They also expressed interest in gaining qualifications which would lead to employment.

Amongst women with some qualifications, experiences of education had usually been very positive. This was particularly the case for women whose first language was not English, where completing a vocational qualification meant that they felt more in control of their lives. Many women explained how they felt more confident and happier with their lives more generally as a result of attending a course or completing a degree. Those who had young children said that another benefit was that they could help their children with their school work, and be a good role model for them. Some women said that when they were young, their older siblings had helped them with their homework because their parents could not. Education, as they put it, gave them more awareness and understanding.

Although there was strong evidence that parents had usually been very encouraging about their children's education, some believed that the consequences of being educated, which often led to employment, were not always what fathers and husbands wanted for their daughters and wives. A number of women felt that some men within the Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities did not support women's aspirations to have a good education; instead they saw education as a threat, as it potentially gave women too much power and independence. Some women expressed concerns that some men's traditional views of women were still holding back women in their communities.

4.2 Experience of employment

Nearly half (28) of the 60 interviews for this study were with women in paid employment. This section considers their experience of employment in terms of the link between education, experience and work.

4.2.1 Link between educational background and employment

Unsurprisingly, these interviews illustrated a strong link between women's educational background and their employment experiences. Those with no formal qualifications were almost always unemployed, or economically inactive, although

one respondent with no formal qualifications was employed. In addition, women with no formal qualifications often spoke very little or no English; a significant barrier to employment in itself. In most cases, women with no qualifications were married with children, many of whom were in their teens or 20s. As mentioned before, younger women with limited English were more often active in seeking opportunities in learning English or wanting to attend different courses.

Those with some qualifications

There was a mixed range of employment experiences among these respondents with qualifications below degree level. Many who were of second generation mentioned holding administrative or secretarial roles, including some working for local authorities or the health sector, or for insurance or finance companies. Some of the younger women of second generation reported having jobs in customer services roles or in call centres.

There were also others who worked in childcare as well as homecare. Some with vocational qualifications worked with young children either as classroom assistants or nursery nurses, and a few women were studying to obtain qualifications to work in education while doing casual part-time work. Some had tried a combination of the types of work mentioned here during their time in paid employment. An example of this is given below by a Pakistani woman in her 20s:

'When I was 19 I completed this diploma in Childhood Studies and I worked in school [as a nursery nurse] for about six months, which I didn't really enjoy...at that time I decided it's not what I want to do. I enjoyed working with children but it was too hectic. I stopped working in school, then I found a job in administration in Job Centre...I worked for about one and a half year. It got a bit boring, working in an office, sitting in front of a computer. At that time I used to work for [named authority] Council for social services. I got registered with them when I was 18.'

A number of these women worked in jobs that involved helping their community. These included roles such as community development worker, health tutor teaching exercise classes to Asian women, housing officer for Asian families, Asian women's network co-ordinator, and working with social workers who dealt with Asian families. Several respondents also mentioned working in Asian women's centres where they ran activities to raise awareness of childcare and education in general. Respondents who were actively working with their community reported that it was a very rewarding experience. Some of the first generation women acknowledged that they knew how it felt to be isolated, having experienced that themselves in the past. Many of the women who were first generation reported that while they had been learning English, they had done various casual jobs such as packing, stacking shelves or factory work. Many had also worked in factories making clothes, and some had done sewing jobs from home while their children were very young to help with the family finances. Some of these women had later progressed into higher level employment.

A 39 year old Pakistani woman who came to England when she was 19 after an arranged marriage decided to look for work when her youngest child was school age. Her nine years of paid employment had been very varied, but she was now doing work which she enjoyed and that she considered to be very valuable:

'I've been doing packing, I've done sugar factory packing. I've done henna painting, then I was a crèche worker. I've done the crèche work courses and training. I was looking after children. In that centre I was working as an outreach development worker working in the centre with the community. Now again I am health tutor, teaching exercises, giving them health information. How they can look after themselves, look after their health and their family's health and I am working for one year again as a community development health worker. Bringing in the community, developing them so they can stand on their feet and then can help themselves. I try to improve their life so they can look after themselves, their families.'

Voluntary work

A number of women with qualifications, regardless of their current employment status, also reported being involved in voluntary work. This included working in schools, nurseries and charity shops as well as in community centres that catered especially for Asian women. Some of these women were first generation migrants and did voluntary work to give them time away from home, so they could meet others and make friends. In other cases, women hoped that voluntary work would lead to paid employment:

'I stopped working about five years ago. I worked with women and children. I did it voluntary for a long time first then we started doing needlework courses and stuff.'

(Pakistani woman in her 20s)

'After I do the voluntary work I didn't find any job at the school or any other school so without money it's so hard, house and outside. I got the experience now so if I want to apply I can say that I've got experience.'

(Bangladeshi woman in her 20s)

'They have been more voluntary [jobs done in the past]. I've done some in a solicitor's firm, charity work mostly, helping out and this was a charity. That's how I got here [working in a women's centre].'

(Pakistani woman in her 20s)

Those with degrees

Many of the women with first or postgraduate degrees were in paid employment. These women usually held reasonably senior positions at work; this was particularly

the case for women who were born in the UK as opposed to those who came to this country as an adult (mostly after an arranged marriage). One woman had recently arrived in the UK after having an arranged marriage. She had been employed in Bangladesh and had also recently finished her postgraduate degree in Bangladesh, but she was not sure how easy she would find it to get a job in this country.

There were some differences between women of first and second generation in terms of their experiences in paid employment, perhaps as some of the first generation women had grown up in, and often obtained their degrees in, their country of origin. They were also usually married with children, and for some their language skills, but mainly confidence in their language skills, was initially a barrier in terms of getting into the level of employment they aspired to. Furthermore, they often did not want to commit themselves to a career when their children were young. They tended to look around for employment opportunities after their children reached school age. A first generation Pakistani woman in her 50s with a Masters degree explained:

'Before I had children I thought I might work, so I did some work with Adult Education. A co-ordinator job...then they [children] started school, I started doing voluntary work in the school because with me I wasn't sure of anything, not the system, not the education. Volunteering was beneficial for my children and for me as well. Learning, finding out. Then school offered me some classroom assistant job. I did that.'

This respondent, like a few other women in the study, stated that when her children were of school age, she went on to do interpreting and translating courses to become a community interpreter. There were several respondents (mostly those with degree level qualifications) who reported doing community interpreting jobs for local authorities and health trusts in their local area. They had mainly done this on a self-employed basis, but had tended to receive regular work from the same employers. These women had sometimes done a number of different jobs, combining interpreting with other work in order to support themselves, and sometimes also their families.

A Bangladeshi woman aged 43 had been working for the past 12 years as the director of a local interpreting and translation service. She was divorced and has children. In the past she had also done short periods of administrative work in offices, out of necessity:

'I haven't had that many jobs, not particularly. The range of jobs I've applied for tended to be quite specific...when I did my degree I had to work for a year which was the criteria for going back and doing a diploma. That was a necessity. When I worked in [a large finance organisation] temping, I was pregnant and my husband wasn't in this country because he didn't have a visa. I needed to support myself, that was a necessity as my work within an insurance company. I needed a job. It could have been any job.'

For second generation women, there was often a more linear career path in terms of what they wanted to achieve and their employment history, particularly for women who did not have children. A number of women had a strong preference for working in the public rather than the private sector, as they considered the culture of public sector to be more flexible and family friendly.

A Bangladeshi woman in her 20s who had obtained a degree a number of years ago and now worked for a local authority in a senior HR position said of her career path:

'I graduated in '99 and following on from that I worked for a private firm specialising in parking management, so I did admin support there but because my degree is in sociology, I really wanted to do some work where I could do some research-based work. I quite enjoy writing, so I wanted to do something a bit more interesting, so I moved into telecom consultancy, but it was quite specialist and quite technical...I didn't get on that well there. Had a break from employment for about three months and then went on to a small research company specialising in shareholders' voting guidelines, I did that for a while then a job came up where my husband worked and I fell into that job and that was looking after pay surveys, benchmark salary surveys for 250 companies, it was a private sector firm. I was there for about two years. It was quite difficult, quite hard work. Very much thrown in the deep end there. Very long hours, not very good pay, so in the end I gave that up... I also wanted to move from private to public [sector] because I was sick of long hours and not very good benefits, I really wanted to make the change into something a bit more comfortable and a supportive environment. That's my current job.'

Breadwinners

There were a few women who reported that they were the primary breadwinners in their marriage, although they were in the minority. In one of these cases, the husband had not been in this country long enough to establish himself in a career.

A second generation Pakistani woman in her 30s had more qualifications than her husband, who had come to the UK from Pakistan. She felt that her upbringing in the UK and her qualifications had made it much easier for her to find employment than it had been for her husband. This had been a cause of some upset for her husband, although she tried to reassure him that it was simply circumstances that were to blame:

'Yes [I am the breadwinner]. He has his good days with this taxi job, he does alright now, in fact we looked at it last time and looked at how much he brings in a month and he's bringing in the same as me. And he felt proud then, because he's always been part-time job or...He always said, "I don't know why I bothered coming here because, compared to you, I feel small, and I just can't do enough". And I said, "no, because this is the job I've been in for 14 years. If you were born here, you would have been in a good job, but you have come over from Pakistan".'

Most women in paid employment considered that it was a joint responsibility for both a husband and wife to bring in the income. Younger respondents who were not married seemed not to have any objections to women being the main breadwinner in a marriage, although they pointed out that this would have not been possible in their mothers' generation.

4.2.2 Combining work and family

Whatever their educational background, the employed women interviewed in this study who had children always made a conscious effort to fit their work around their childcare responsibilities. They often worked part-time and/or in jobs that offered them the flexibility they needed to be able to do this. Some had found that office-based jobs fit this purpose, and some women with first or postgraduate degrees had chosen to work in jobs that they were perhaps over-qualified for, in order to be able to work part-time, gain flexibility, and balance the demands of their family with their work.

The small number of women who were very focused on their career paths did not have children. However, they emphasised that if they did, childcare was something they would not take lightly. They would want to take time off (at least a year) to spend with them. A few thought that with their qualifications, working from home could be an option for them, which would enable them to spend more time with their children when they were young.

In general, there was a strong view that mothers should be the main carer of their children, although younger women who were born in this country were more likely to consider using formal childcare to allow them to work.

4.3 Barriers to employment

On the whole, women who were in paid employment felt very positive about their experiences. However, there were some factors reported as being potential barriers to women when finding employment or during employment.

4.3.1 Language barriers

The language barrier was often mentioned by those whose first language was not English. A Bangladeshi woman in her 20s with some qualifications was a good example in terms of explaining her frustration at not being able to find a job:

'Nobody say that but I feel it's a problem. I am trying to find the school job and the employment solution centre, I tell them I am finding work if you help me, it will be okay. They said your English speaking is a little bit problem because you are not speaking the proper English.'

4.3.2 Poor health

A few of the older women mentioned poor health as a barrier to finding work or staying in work. For example, a first generation Pakistani woman in her 50s had worked in a building society for 13 years until her health started to deteriorate. She was in and out of hospital for a long time and was eventually made redundant. A number of the women also reported that the women of their parents' generation were, in theory, young enough to work, but that their health had declined rapidly in recent years. Some felt that this was in part because they had spent so much of their lives at home, looking after others.

4.3.3 Discrimination

Some respondents seemed to make a conscious effort to avoid applying for jobs where they felt that they might face discrimination. A couple of respondents who were in casual jobs reported that having long leave periods had caused them to lose their jobs, for example, when they had had to go to Pakistan or Bangladesh for a family matter.

A second generation Pakistani woman in her 20s held a view which echoed others' – that certain corporate environments would not be easy places for them to work:

'Barriers in the sense of...if it's the case of my race or gender then no, I don't think I have [faced any barriers to finding work]. That might be because I've never applied for any jobs where I might face that. Most of the jobs are at the call centre or office admin based. In those terms I don't think I have...if I worked at something that is more male dominated or white dominated where ethnic minorities are literally minorities, then yes, more than likely I would.'

Those who were in more professional jobs referred to more indirect discrimination. When talking about discrimination, some referred to religious dress codes. For example, a second generation Bangladeshi woman in her 40s said:

'Within jobs I think there's quite a bit of indirect discrimination. Certainly when I worked for HR there was an underlying perception: she wears the Hijab, she must be stupid or she doesn't speak English. There were a lot of assumptions made and I was indirectly discriminated against. I've had the experience where I am liaising. I've got the responsibility but because I job shared at the time, the feedback and comments and communication then comes back to my co-manager at the time. For me that was discrimination, it was subtle. Because I haven't had that many jobs I haven't been subjected to it to that degree, it has tended to be more indirect.'

A Bangladeshi woman in her 20s who worked for a government department explained how her dream was to become a fashion journalist. She had a postgraduate degree in journalism and plenty of relevant work experience, which she thought should help her find the job she had always wanted. She was very frustrated that it was not happening for her. She seemed convinced that her looks and her name's Islamic connotation were the main barrier to her not being able to succeed in her search.

'The barriers to being a journalist is that I am just not the right type of person at all. I mean, magazines openly say they want someone blonde and middle class. They really are just like that. I mean, I have had very good interviews with all the top publishers in the UK...you get to the interview then you realise that everyone in the office looks like the model on the front cover of the magazine and you just think you will never get the job there at all...I think it is my name putting people off as well. It is so blatantly Islamic. I've got three parts to my name and every part is just ethnic.'

A few also mentioned that their cultural upbringing could sometimes have an adverse effect when applying for jobs. These women felt that Bangladeshi and Pakistani parents' traditionally strict upbringing ways did sometimes conflict with the way the labour market operates in this country:

'We [Asian women] have a lot of competition from people who are qualified the same, but they have the extra edge. They are more likely to have travelled, to have more diverse interests and are more employable because they look a certain way and they are a certain way. Talking about young white women...there'll always be a young white woman more able to fit into an organisation, is more likely to be sociable, to go out drinking and be a more attractive person in all sorts of ways.'

(Bangladeshi woman in her 20s)

Many respondents in paid employment also referred to other restrictions and described these as their own choices. For example, some women reported wanting to live near home where parents lived; others chose not to work full-time and were aware that would be a restriction in their job search:

'I moved back near my mum when I was pregnant, I had her [baby daughter] and now looking after her is a lot easier having my mum close. I see my family all the time, close by. The main reason for not getting a job over there [where she studied for her first degree] is that my family was here.'

(Pakistani woman in her 20s)

4.4 Attitudes to employment

This section turns to women's attitudes towards employment, looking at the perceived positive and negative aspects of employment, the factors which women

felt enabled them to work, and finally a consideration of whether attitudes were changing.

4.4.1 Positive aspects of employment

Many of the women we interviewed felt strongly that paid employment was a good thing. They referred to benefits including:

- financial independence;
- having more control over one's life;
- feeling that they were contributing towards their family's finances (joint responsibility);
- not feeling guilty about spending money on themselves;
- having a social life outside their home;
- benefits to health, self-esteem and confidence.

Financial independence

The importance of financial independence for women was mentioned by many respondents, regardless of their own employment status. However, those who were in paid employment emphasised that they had experienced how beneficial this was in their own lives:

'It was a part-time job but it gave me a bit of independence, a bit of financial support as well for myself.'

(Pakistani woman in her 30s)

'At least you know you've got some income coming in. You know you have a paid job to go to.'

(Pakistani woman in her 20s)

Many women felt that earning money for themselves gave them some control in their lives, rather than being controlled by husbands or in-laws. They tended to perceive paid employment as their freedom and as something that gave them the right to make choices for themselves. A divorced Bangladeshi woman in her 40s said of her employment:

'I wasn't going to be financially dependent on another individual. Being financially dependent meant that I would be emotionally dependent. I wanted decisions that I made not to be influenced by the fact that I was financially dependent on somebody...if my husband had a great job and was able to support me, fine but I never wanted to be in a position...I know lots of women who are stuck in marriages because they are financially dependent, otherwise they would be out...I wanted to be in control of my life.'

Some women said they wanted their daughters to have some financial independence, and they also referred to being able to stand on their own two

feet and to the possibility of marriage not always working out. Some wanted their daughters to have options they themselves had not had:

'If I had a daughter I'd want her to become either a teacher, not even a certain thing, something that would give her a good income, so that if she, if her husband does become a very horrible person, she doesn't have to worry because I can earn for myself. It's not like I have to fall for you. Have to follow on with you. She can earn for herself.'

(Pakistani woman in her 20s)

Many women in paid employment said that not having to ask for money from their husbands or parents was a very good feeling. They said they could spend their money on what they liked, either on themselves or on their children. Most women who were in paid employment spoke about their contributing towards family finances, which improved their home lives. They often felt that both men and women should have responsibility for bringing in an income. There were a few cases where women were expected to hand in their earnings to husbands or in-laws which created tension within the marriage.

For women who were married with children, work often took second place as they changed from full-time to part-time working hours, but they still saw financial independence as an important reason to continue to work. These women often reported that after having children they treated their work not as a career but a job that gave them money. However, after having a second child, some women had stopped working until their children were of school age. Those who worked often talked about their income in terms of it allowing them to buy luxuries, such as holidays, or toys for the children, rather than essentials. Some felt that as a family they would probably be able to manage without a second (ie their own) income, but to achieve a certain standard of living, it was necessary for them to work. The following quotes are from two Pakistani women in their 30s:

'If we wanted things, if we wanted luxury things, we both had to work. That was the way we thought of it. If you want a nice car, we are going to both have to work.'

'I have to earn money because my husband didn't earn enough. He was working on the buses with a lot of overtime, hard work. We always looked for a bigger house, that is when we think we need to earn more money.'

Younger respondents who were single also agreed that both men and women have joint responsibility in terms of bringing in income to the household, and some said that they would be prepared to be the main earner if necessary:

'In an ideal world it would be both, shared responsibility. You can't dump everything on one person. I wouldn't be able to sit down while somebody tells me this is how the money is going to be spent and this is how kids are going to be looked after and this is how we're going to do the house. I'd like it to be equal.'

(Pakistani woman in her 20s)

Social benefits

Women in employment often spoke positively about the social aspects of their jobs. They felt that it gave them a chance to spend time away from the home and gave them an opportunity to mix with a wide range of people. They also felt that work gave them more of a sense of self, and gave them more to talk about with others. As was mentioned in Section 3.6 on leisure and socialising, some women had to balance the social expectations of their work culture with the culture and expectations of their family and community:

'You go out of the house and your colleagues, you talk. Everything with work. It's a chance to get out of the house...it's nice you can tell someone "I'm working" instead of saying "I applied for JSA".'

(Pakistani woman in her 20s)

Health and confidence

There were others who felt that working was good for health, self-esteem and confidence. Related to the section about social benefits, several women made the point that working was not just about earning money, but mixing with people outside the home, which was very beneficial for well-being and mental health. A Pakistani woman in her 50s who had stopped work due to ill-health commented that this was becoming more widely recognised by men as well as women:

'Instead of staying at home and getting depressed, they [husbands] want their wives to go out and come out of their illness. Everybody who stays home goes mental, depressed.'

4.4.2 Negative aspects of employment

Lack of time with children and family

A lack of time with children and family was the main negative aspect of employment mentioned by the women who took part in this study. Most women who were married with children talked about not being able to spend all their time with their children as the most negative effect of paid work. This was a common view both amongst women who worked and those who did not. Those who worked and also had children said that they had sometimes felt guilty about leaving them and going out to work, and they had found the resulting lack of time with their children very difficult:

'Having to go to work everyday and not seeing your kids. That's negative. It's like she's grown up and where it's gone. I have missed out on it.'

(Pakistani woman in her 30s)

'The fact that I have to work and can't be home with my children. I would love to be financially independent so I could be at home for my children to give them the time, care and attention...I don't feel I am a good parent because I am juggling two roles in one. The role of being the mother and the breadwinner.'

(Bangladeshi woman in her 40s)

Even those who were not yet married but had intention of getting married and having children talked about this negative aspect of paid employment:

'If it was full-time if I did have kids, not spending much time with my kids, spending so much time in employment. If it was part-time I don't think there would have been any negative effects. I'm doing what I like which is working and having a life of my own in some sense and then coming home to my kids and family.'

(Pakistani woman in her 20s)

Other limitations

Younger respondents sometimes expressed concerns that their parents did not want them to work during certain times of the day. They said that they were limited to a certain extent to working in areas and at times that their parents would approve of. Not being out after dark was the most usual constraint mentioned:

'I am on the verge of leaving [my job]. I'm still thinking because they [employer] want to change my shift from 12 'till half-six. It's coming up to winter and it's going to be dark in the evenings and mum doesn't want me out in the dark.'

(Pakistani woman in her 20s)

4.4.3 Enabling factors

In terms of the things which women felt enabled them to work and to balance this with the other areas of their life, particularly family and children, the importance of having some flexibility at work was highlighted. For some, location was also important.

Flexibility

For women with children, flexibility at work was one of the key factors which women said made it possible for them to work and balance the needs of their families. They also said that having some flexibility at work, usually in terms of hours worked, made their working lives much less stressful and more enjoyable than they would otherwise be. Most working women agreed that they were much happier when they had understanding and flexible employers. They defined this as being able to work part-time, or work shorter hours on occasion, or being allowed time off to attend hospital appointments for themselves or for a relative. Many women said they needed some flexibility at work to take account of their childcare responsibilities, and almost all the women who had children of school

age reported working part-time hours. A couple of women did interpreting or translating work where they determined their own working patterns as they were self-employed. They chose where and when they worked, and said that this autonomy was the greatest asset of their jobs.

Location

A number of women also talked about the convenience of working in their local area or within walking distance from home. Some women said that they felt much happier about working fairly close to home, particularly if they had children, and needed to take them to and from school, or so that they were close by if one of their children fell ill.

4.4.4 Changing attitudes?

On the whole, most women we interviewed felt that there had been a substantial shift in attitudes and expectations regarding employment. This was particularly so amongst younger women in their teens and 20s, when comparing their experiences to those of their mothers, aunts and grandmothers. They felt that there had been a shift in attitudes between generations as a result of many younger Pakistani and Bangladeshi women having grown up in the UK. Some also felt that the ways in which culture and religion were interpreted were changing. These two factors are discussed in turn below.

Generational differences

The differences in attitudes between generations were often mentioned by women when they talked about changes in attitudes and expectations regarding women and work. Many respondents explained that in their mothers' time it was expected that women would get married very young, have five or six children and stay at home to look after their husband and children. They also emphasised that this was the case for all women of their mothers' generation, even for those who were highly educated. The traditional values of their mothers' generation often determined that it was always women who stayed at home to look after the children, while men went out to work to support their family. However, they said that there had been a considerable shift in attitudes in many Pakistani and Bangladeshi families living in the UK (although not all) in just one generation. Respondents who were younger and were born and brought up in the UK very often referred to themselves as living examples of the visible change between generations and how expectations have changed for women in their communities. Many also believed that living within the British culture had encouraged some Bangladeshi and Pakistani women to question their own cultural values. A second generation Pakistani woman in her teens commented:

'It's the second generation. Because of the way we've been brought up, because of the cultures that we've been influenced to. It's more a case of second generation standing their ground and saying "no, we're not going to do it (marry early and stay home full-time), we want to make our lives. You've brought us into this country therefore we need to live in this country". Obviously not forget your own roots but adopt cultures and values that are going to get you far in this life.'

Many of the women said that they felt that change of this nature was inevitable. However, they always stressed that staying true to their cultural identity and 'roots' was very important for them. Several women who were born and brought up in the UK felt that this sometimes put extra pressure on them in terms of the expectations of family and the wider community. In some cases, no matter how well educated and how successful a career a woman had, the expectation that women will look after their children when they are young was still very strong, both from the community, and the women themselves. A highly educated second generation Bangladeshi woman in employment commented:

'Still a lot of women I know [Bangladeshi and Pakistani], they're trying to juggle. They have been pushed into becoming educated, and they want to put that education to use and ultimately they choose to stay at home, they're doctors, dentists, engineers. Ultimately the family is the priority.'

(Bangladeshi woman in her 40s)

Older respondents who had come to the UK as children, or after an arranged marriage, also said they had witnessed the change in their parents' attitudes (especially their mothers' attitudes) towards paid work. A number of women said that in the past, parents had encouraged the boys but not the girls in their family into education and employment, but that this was changing. In a lot of Pakistani and Bangladeshi families, it was now becoming more 'normal' and therefore, more acceptable, for both men and women to go to college and work:

'A lot of our Asian community are afraid of other people, "if our daughters do this". First, going to college or working were big things for us girls. All our relatives used to talk about us, "oh my God, his daughter goes to college now".'

(Pakistani woman in her 20s)

Culture, religion and employment

A number of women explained that they felt some members of the older generation had wrongly attributed the traditional role of women staying at home to the religion of Islam. These women strongly disagreed that the Muslim religion dictated this, and said that in their view, this interpretation of Islam (especially by men) had been used to prevent women from being educated, to put women off working, and to keep them at home. They explained that these views were not from the Koran, but were bound up in culture, which had in turn influenced the way that religious teachings had traditionally been interpreted. Several of these

women said that they had checked for themselves what the Koran said, and they had found that, in contrast to what they had been told in the past, Islam gave women choices and power. Hence, they felt that their religion supported their rights to education and employment. A Bangladeshi woman in her 20s who had recently arrived in the UK after marriage made this point strongly:

'Yes [it's about culture] but it's not Islam. I think Islam is one of the most liberating religions when it comes to women because it always mentions the fact that women are equal to men. They have never said anything that says men are superior to women. They have never said it. I've checked myself and said, you know what, I am hearing all these things, let me just verify it for myself. And whatever I've read, whatever I've researched, it's definitely true. It's like, our God has always said, "I've made both of you as equal to each other..." men and women, they compliment each other, balance each other out...Islam never said that women are supposed to stay at home. It says they can make their own decision.'

When employed Muslim women in this study talked about their religion with regard to changing attitudes towards employment, they often said that maintaining their religious values was very compatible with education and employment, because religion and culture were separate. They were in agreement that it was not Islam which held women back in terms of education and employment; it was more to do with the cultural values associated with Islam. Some women expressed frustration that Pakistani and Bangladeshi men's attitudes and expectations were not changing in line with many women's attitudes. For example, some women talked about how their husbands still held on to the traditional gender roles and this was often encouraged by their in-laws.

'Islam does not say you cannot do these things – women are allowed to work. Some people still hang on to the old values of religion and feel scared.'

(Bangladeshi woman in her 20s)

'In religion they don't say don't work or do arranged marriages. Culture, they do.'

(Pakistani woman in her 30s)

4.5 Career choices and aspirations

This section looks at the career aspirations of the women interviewed for this study, focusing mainly on the younger women who had not yet forged careers, or older women who hoped to enter the labour market at some point in the future. We begin by looking at women's role models, and then turn to the desirable careers or job roles which were commonly cited by women in this study. Finally, the section outlines women's aspirations for their daughters.

4.5.1 Role models

When asked about who they would aspire to be like or who they saw as their role models, most of the women we interviewed said that their mother was their role model. It was often striking that they spoke of how their mothers had come to the UK after an arranged marriage, and the hard times their mothers had been through to survive in a new culture. The fact that so many women, of all ages and from a variety of socio-economic and educational backgrounds chose their mother as their role model demonstrates again the crucial importance that women of all generations and migrational backgrounds place on their families and the role of women as mothers. Again, this links in with the view of many that paid employment would need to be flexible enough to fit around family and childcare responsibilities (see Section 4.4.3 on factors enabling women to work):

'My mum [is my role model]. Because of everything that she's had to put up with and everything that she's been through. Everything that she's going through.'

(Pakistani woman in her 20s)

'I looked up to my mum a lot. She did a lot for other people. Not only in our family. She used to like doing charity work. I did admire that a lot.'

(Pakistani woman in her 20s)

'Obviously, I really respect my mother and I think she was an amazing woman; she is not alive anymore so she is not a current role model but I do think about her everyday and in the way that she was always right about things. It was kind of like she must have had so much knowledge and also she has done something that I have never ever done because I mean she got married when she was 15 then she came over to a different country and she had to take on an entirely different culture.'

(Bangladeshi woman in her 20s)

There were also examples of older sisters being given as role models by the respondents. These older sisters were described as 'success stories' in terms of balancing work and family. They were usually married with children and juggled the home and work life well and respondents felt that they were successful at keeping this very important balance. In most cases, they worked part-time:

'My sister, she does a lot of housework and stuff, and then she does an outside job as well, like she works for the NHS. So I think she will be my role model...she looks after her daughter and then you know, she kind of does an outside job as well.'

(Bangladeshi woman in her teens)

Other role models included aunts, cousins, friends and teachers. On the whole, the respondents we interviewed chose as role models women they saw as brave,

independent and strong, who had overcome difficulties in their lives or had challenged stereotypes. The way one young first generation Bangladeshi woman described her role model was echoed by several others:

'Obviously we do look up to other people but when I was in Bangladesh there was a lady called [name given], I always looked up to her...back in the days women were not allowed to go to school or study, she was the kind of person who fought for women's rights, helped education for women, introduced education for women.'

(Bangladeshi woman in her 20s)

A few women also talked about their role models having a good knowledge of their religion (Islam) and living and practicing Islam in a positive way:

'I admire a lot of people. I actually admire one of my teachers, she's my Islamic Studies teacher. It's the way she dresses and she has no fear when she goes out...the way she explains it [Islam] we can still have fun, go out with our mates, go to the cinemas, we can still go to the park, have fun, but we just have to stay away from the simple things. It's not very hard if you come to think about it.'

(Bangladeshi woman in her teens)

4.5.2 Teaching or working with children

Many of the women we interviewed reported that they had thought about becoming a teacher when they were young, and said they thought they would enjoy working with children. The desire to become a teacher or work with young children was mentioned by many of the women interviewed, regardless of their age, educational background or marital status. Most of these women had younger siblings and had played a large part in their upbringing. Some mentioned that they were old enough to be in charge of these siblings and had acted as second mothers to their younger brothers and sisters. Having an educational role at work seemed very important to them. Many who had thought about teaching when they were young as well as those who were actually working in education talked about having mothers who had, in the past, worked as teachers. Women also liked the idea of being a teacher because they considered teaching to be a flexible job.

A number of the women had some experience of doing this kind of work; those with vocational qualifications reported working as classroom assistants, nursery nurses or crèche workers. A few women were qualified teachers, some having gained the qualifications in the UK, and some in their homeland before they migrated. There were also women who had taught in Pakistan or Bangladesh, but who had not worked since coming to the UK, for reasons including language barriers, lack of transferability of their homeland qualifications to a UK setting, and a lack of confidence.

A Bangladeshi woman in her 20s who had recently come to the UK to join her British husband explained that she planned to find work in the education sector. She reported that her mother had worked as a teacher before she got married and had also completed a PhD when she was younger. This woman was currently not employed as she said she needed time to adjust to her new home and status and wanted to enjoy family life. She was working in a multinational firm in Bangladesh before she came to the UK.

'Ultimately, my career plan would be to probably go into teaching in higher education, because in Bangladesh or anywhere teaching is a very flexible job. You can choose the class timings, when you want to take lectures. And I enjoy being with people and students, obviously young people...not in a corporate environment. I've had my taste of the corporate environment and it takes a lot out of you.'

4.5.3 Working in the community

Some women we interviewed talked about how they had thought they would become involved in social work or care work. The idea of being involved in community work was very appealing to them. They were united in their views about how rewarding it would be to work with their communities, to be in a position to help vulnerable people and those in most need. In fact, several respondents reported either currently studying for degrees in social work or planning to go into social work.

Some women said that they would like to work in community education, for example, working with very young children or adults in the community. Those who did charity or voluntary work in community centres for Asian women often talked about how rewarding they found the experience of working with people in the community.

4.5.4 Traditional gender roles

While women had begun to break with the ultra-traditional patriarchal view that their role should be in the home, they have often not wholly done so. The employment aspirations of many of the women in this research (who were not in employment) were characterised by child-related or care-related roles, which to some extent replicated their former domestic expectations in a different environment. For example, many hoped to work with children as nursery or primary school teachers. Others wanted to work with their community, or in social care. It should, of course, be remembered that the women who took part in this research do not constitute a representative sample of Pakistani and Bangladeshi women in the UK, but nonetheless, the recurring themes in terms of their role models and aspirations are interesting.

A couple of respondents had thought about becoming doctors and several were passionately encouraged by parents to go into medicine. There were

other exceptions to the most common aspirations; a few women talked about considering roles which were well outside the stereotypical range of jobs for women. They tended to be young and had been born and brought up in the UK. A third generation Pakistani woman in her early 20s said:

'I used to think that girls don't like engineering and computer stuff but when I was in A' levels I was told to consider engineering. They say there's not a lot of girls in it and I entered engineering. I would have got a sponsorship to do my A' levels and my degree. I wasn't really interested in that. I don't think these days there isn't anything that women can't do. Women are in the army and driving buses.'

4.5.5 Women's aspirations for their daughters

When asked what their aspirations were or would be for their children, particularly daughters, most women said they would want them to have a good education. This response was given by respondents across all ages and generations, and regardless of their own educational background. It was important for these women that their daughters were confident, independent and sociable. They said they would listen to their daughters and give them freedom because they would want them to be happy with the choices they made for themselves. These views were summarised well by a first generation Bangladeshi woman in her 20s who had recently married:

'When you've given your kids all you could have given them, you've shared your older experience, you've given all the wisdom you could have given them, but after a certain point, you just have to let them be; make your decisions, make your own mistakes, learn from them...so we'll just be there to help them out and support them in whatever way we can.'

Many young women we interviewed made a point about not wanting to force their children (particularly daughters) into making decisions that would have a negative impact on their lives. They said that, unlike some in the older generation, they would always want to understand their children rather than condemn them:

'My mum has given me that freedom in the last five to six years. She's said, "live your life the way you want to live it. If you make mistakes, I'll be there for you", as opposed to some mothers who have said, "you've made a mistake, I never want to see you again". That has happened to so many of my friends. I could not do that to my children.'

(Pakistani woman in her 20s)

Some women also said they would not want their daughters to forget their cultural identity, but wanted their daughters to appreciate their traditions as well as their religion. Most of the women interviewed said that it was taken for granted that their daughters would marry and have children, but they usually hoped that they would first get a good education, and possibly a career also, to give them a good start and more choices in their lives.

4.6 Self-employment

This section covers issues of self-employment. We look at women's experience of self-employment, self-employment in the extended family, and finally at attitudes towards this way of working.

4.6.1 Experience of self-employment

A small number of the women we interviewed were self-employed or in paid employment but in the process of starting a business. The women who were currently self-employed were working as interpreters and translators, and said they enjoyed the work they did and the flexibility it gave them. They could accept as much or as little work as they wanted, which meant that they could control the amount of time they spent at home and at work:

'They have pools of interpreters and if I have a family commitment or if I want to do something else I can say "I'm not available today". I don't have to give a reason. I can't say this all the time but that's the good thing. They'll ring someone else up. You have to do your own tax and I enjoy it.'

(Pakistani woman in her 20s)

'My children are much older and I feel I can have a holiday when I want with the work flexibility...and I feel that maybe at times I don't want too much work, I can do that.'

(Pakistani woman in her 50s)

Several of the women we interviewed had worked in a family business, especially when they were younger. These businesses were typically shops and in one case, a home sewing business.

4.6.2 Husbands and extended family

Although there were only a few examples of self-employment among the women we interviewed, it was very common for them to have members of their extended family who owned their own business. In a few cases, women had worked in the family business for a short time in the past.

Three of the women we interviewed said that their husband was self-employed. Two were taxi drivers and the other was a driving instructor with a franchise through a large company. This arrangement seemed to be working well in all three cases and although women had some concerns about their husbands being self-employed, such as job security and the lack of benefits, they also enjoyed the flexibility that it gave over hours of work:

'He loves it [being a driving instructor] and has not looked back since. I keep saying to him what about teaching because all those qualifications have been wasted. He says "no because here I am my own boss and I can come and go as I please". I think if you don't work you don't get paid, you have no holiday pay, no sick pay whereas me if I ring in sick I've got those incentives but he says "look I don't work on Saturdays and Sundays, I have got an income and I am on my feet".'

(Pakistani woman in her 30s)

There were many examples of self-employment in the wider family either now or in the past in a wide range of areas, such as:

- restaurants;
- shops (including a sports shop, clothes shops, textile shops);
- an accountancy firm;
- a taxi business;
- a sewing business;
- a self-employed life coach;
- property development.

In most cases, the businesses had been successful and were seen as a positive achievement. In a few cases, women had seen a family business fail and this made them more cautious about the idea of self-employment in the future.

4.6.3 Attitudes towards self-employment

When asked if they had ever thought about being self-employed or would in the future, some women thought that self-employment would definitely not be for them, but many were positive about the idea of being self-employed. The benefits were seen as:

- flexibility;
- determining your own hours;
- being your own boss;
- the potential to earn more money than as an employee.

'Having your own business, you're your own boss. No-one telling you what to do. You know how many hours you'll be working. It's your business. You don't need to ask someone for a day off, you have people working under you. You're the boss.'

(Pakistani woman in her 20s)

A lack of the initial capital required to set up a business was seen to be the main barrier to self-employment. Many of those who thought there were many benefits to being self-employed had concerns including the financial risks, possibly having

to work long hours, being solely responsible for the business, being unsure of how much you would earn, having to deal with tax issues, and the lack of job security and of benefits such as a pension or sick pay. For them, these risks outweighed the potential benefits of self-employment:

'I can't take risks. I'm just one of those people that's stuck in a rut and gets used to it...It's more headache. It's tax. It's upkeep. Now you just clock off and come home, end of story.'

(Pakistani woman in her 30s)

'I have toyed with the idea [of being self-employed]. Something I might have thought about if I was single and didn't have children. The security is too important. Business, there's a risk.'

(Bangladeshi woman in her 40s)

'My concerns are over finance and knowing how to do it right because not just the finance but all the tax and all the rules that go with, like if you are having a member of staff, how to treat them. All those little things. I am not scared of the actual day to day work.'

(Bangladeshi woman in her 20s)

Those who had considered, or were seriously considering, self-employment were thinking of working in many different areas. One felt she would like to open an internet café but had not really made any solid plans. One had planned to open a launderette in the past but had pulled out before it had come to fruition due to the fear of it not being successful:

'We did have plans. It was going to be a launderette. I got cold feet and I regret it now. I thought he [husband] doesn't know much about business and I don't so we're going to end up losing everything.'

(Pakistani woman in her 30s)

Another woman was considering going into the property business with advice from her father who had experience of buying and selling properties. Two other women said that they would like to be self-employed but had not thought specifically about what type of business they would like. The main source of support or guidance on self employment issues seemed to be from friends or family members with relevant experience.

5 Conclusions and policy implications

This chapter presents the conclusions from the research, and also some of the emerging policy implications.

5.1 Conclusions

5.1.1 A diverse population

The interviews with the 60 women who took part in this study revealed considerable diversity in terms of their background, education, aspirations and career paths. The great variation in life histories and attitudes which this research has captured demonstrates that the lives of Pakistani and Bangladeshi women do not always fit with stereotypical assumptions. Whilst marriage and children were themes which ran through most women's lives, the variety in all other areas of these women's lives was clearly apparent, with no two women telling the same story.

5.1.2 Change between generations

Women generally felt that the influence of generational and migrational background on attitudes and expectations was often strong, regardless of their own age and background. It was often felt that many second generation and younger women held less traditional views than their older relatives in terms of education and employment. Indeed, many of the younger second generation women in this research thought that their own experiences bore this out. Some said that they and some of their peers were subject to fewer constraints by family and community expectations in a number of areas of their lives. Aspirations around work and education were felt to be changing, and changing fairly rapidly. Some women said that change had happened between their and their parents' generations, whilst others felt that change was taking place more quickly than this, and pointed to the changes they had witnessed amongst their own families and friends over the last five to ten years. In general, women felt that it had become more acceptable for young women to be well educated and to work. It was partly as a result of this, that it was seen as more acceptable for women to marry later, for example

to delay marriage until later in their 20s, than would have been the case in the past. In turn, it had become normal to start families later. However, there was also evidence of continuity, both of belief and expectation; thus, marriage and children were still viewed as life events which would happen to every woman. In this respect there was little change between the generations.

5.1.3 Influence of religion and culture

Women felt that living according to their religion (usually Islam) and preserving their culture were very important, and this was regardless of educational background, migrational background or employment history. Several women pointed out that religion had often been misinterpreted by men, which had resulted in women staying at home rather than pursuing education and careers. They felt that obtaining a good education and having a career was compatible with their religion, and in fact they felt that Islam promoted equality between women and men.

5.1.4 The importance of family

Family was viewed as the most important thing in women's lives by virtually all of the women in this research. They valued education and employment as well, but felt that family should come first, whether this was to look after children, or to care for elderly parents, in-laws or other elderly or infirm family members.

Marriage

There was an automatic assumption from virtually all women interviewed who had not been married, that they would get married in the future. All those who were married said that this had always been assumed in their future when they were younger. All women who were not yet married aspired to do so, although some wanted to wait longer than their parents were happy with. Mothers' main concern was that their daughters married within their religion; most commonly the religion was Islam, but there were also examples of this view from a small number of Pakistani Christian women. There was some preference to marry within the extended family, for example, a cousin or other more distant relative, which would ensure that the husband to be was from a 'good family' with customs and expectations similar to their own.

Arranged marriages were reportedly common but women felt that there was often more choice within these than there had been in the past, and in some cases women just needed to have their family's approval for someone they themselves suggested. Arranged marriages did not appear to be confined to any particular sub-group of women, for example, those with less autonomy in other areas of their lives. Some highly educated women with successful careers said that they would prefer their parents to arrange their marriage in order to ensure their parents' full support in the future. There were a few examples of love marriages, although these were always within the same religion (in one case a Christian man converted to Islam before marriage to a Muslim woman). Virtually all women felt that it was very important for their parents to approve of their future husband. There were no examples of cohabitation or of having children outside marriage.

There was clearly a high commitment to marriages, and to making them work. Most of those who had been divorced or separated had been through a long ordeal before making that decision. A number had experienced long-term depression as a result.

Children

The role of a mother was felt to be desirable, important and influential. Virtually all of the women interviewed had, or wanted, children, and most saw it as a natural progression within any marriage. The size of families was felt to be shrinking, with many women reporting that they and other women in their communities were having two or three children, which was fewer than their number of siblings. Younger women in particular, saw smaller families as a better option for them, being less of a financial strain and enabling them to juggle childcare and work responsibilities.

Women, particularly younger and second generation women, who had been in employment before they were married usually continued working afterwards, but there was a strong desire to take a break from work once they had children in order to look after them while they were small. A few women had returned to work before their children went to school. However, many women felt that they would not want to return to work until their children were at least of school age. Those who had been out of the labour market for a long time, or in some cases had never worked in the UK, felt it was unlikely that they would be willing to seek work until their children were much older than this, typically well into their teens. Younger women, and women who had been born in the UK tended to have less traditional views, and were keener to find ways to combine marriage, children, education and employment.

Caring for other members of the family

There was reportedly a very strong culture of caring for older family members and in-laws. The responsibility for caring for other members of the family, usually elderly or ill parents or parents-in-law, tended to rest with the eldest daughter, the wife of the eldest son, or in some cases, any unmarried daughters, depending on individual family circumstances. In order to fulfil their caring responsibilities, some of the women interviewed had taken breaks from education, or decided not to take up particular career plans, such as university, in order to devote their time to caring for a sick or elderly relative.

There was little or no mention of formal caring or support for carers by the women interviewed; however, it seems that caring for elderly relatives causes considerable disruption to women's lives, sometimes preventing them from fulfilling their education or career expectations. There were also views from some that their own parents wanted to remain independent for as long as possible. Perhaps culturally sensitive support for carers and for those wishing to remain independent could assist these groups.

Domestic responsibilities

Higher levels of education and paid employment appeared to have some influence over the share of domestic tasks in the home. Women with qualifications and careers tended to report a more equal share of domestic responsibilities between themselves and their husbands. In contrast, women who had never been in paid employment and who shouldered the burden of most household tasks sometimes felt that they simply would not have time to work outside the home.

5.1.5 The value of education

Education was valued very highly, regardless of women's own educational background, their migrational background, employment or marital status. A mixture of vocational and academic qualifications were held by the women interviewed, most commonly reported by the younger women. Degrees and masters degrees were held by women of first and second generation, and had been obtained in the UK and less frequently, in Pakistan or Bangladesh. Most of the women with degrees said that their parents had passionately believed in the value of education for their daughters.

The influence of parents

The influence and support of family in women's education was clear and profound. Family circumstances and parental attitudes had often shaped the extent to which education was pursued beyond school, especially amongst older women. Socio-economic background was a factor in the importance placed on education for its own sake, with families from more middle class backgrounds placing considerable importance on the intrinsic value of education. They also felt that a good education would assist women in their future role of mother as well as in a career. A few younger women had parents who were highly educated themselves, and they had tended to promote education to their daughters for its own sake. Others reported that their parents had not had the opportunity to go to university, but wanted this for their daughters, as they felt it would give them career choices and a stable future which they themselves had not had. In a similar way, the women interviewed who did not have qualifications themselves wanted their daughters (and their sons) to be educated, often to degree level. Attitudes around women attending college and university appeared to have been changing rapidly, with this having become more acceptable and more normal in recent years. There was also an influence of older siblings on younger daughters who followed their older sisters into higher education. In fact, older siblings were sometimes reported to have made going to university a more acceptable option for their younger sisters in the eyes of the community.

Those with no qualifications

Women with no qualifications were usually older women who were first generation migrants to the UK, although some were younger women who had recently arrived from the UK for marriage. They sometimes spoke little English. Younger

women, in particular, were keen to learn English and to take other courses to assist them in settling in the UK. Older women with little English often did not feel comfortable outside the home aside from in community centres where others spoke the languages with which they felt comfortable.

5.1.6 Employment issues

There appeared to be a strong link between women's levels of education and qualifications, and their engagement in the labour market. Those with some qualifications, especially those with degrees were usually in paid employment, while scarcely any of those women without qualifications were employed, and no women without good English language skills were employed. Women with qualifications such as degrees tended to have aspirations to work throughout their lives, although most wanted to take time off to look after their children when they were young.

There was a wide range of jobs being done by the women in the study, although there often appeared to be a preference for public or voluntary sector employers. Younger women and those without careers often focused their aspirations around stereotypical 'female' careers, including working with children in nurseries and schools, community work and social care work. Interestingly, role models were rarely viewed in terms of career aspirations, but more in terms of their role as a mother. Occasionally, women chose as their role model a woman in their family who had combined being a mother with having a career.

Positive aspects of employment

Having some level of financial independence was seen to be important by many, including those who did not work. Those who did felt it was important to contribute to the family finances, and this in turn gave them a sense of control over their lives. Women also felt that going to work and earning their own money enabled them to have a social life outside their home, and to spend money on themselves without feeling guilty. Working was also felt to have health benefits, particularly in terms of raised confidence, self-esteem, and warding off depression.

Children or career?

The most negative aspect of employment was felt to be less time to spend with the family, particularly with young children. It was extremely rare for women to choose a career over having a family, and rare for women to choose to work full-time once they had young children. However, there was some evidence that women were increasingly happy to have children later in life and waiting some time after they married before starting a family. There was still felt to be some pressure from older generations for women to have children soon after marriage, however, younger siblings felt less pressure if their older sisters had children relatively late, for example, in their late 20s or early 30s. Younger women and second generation women often placed considerable value on having an education and a career, and having been financially independent before they had children.

According to those interviewed, women with careers were more likely to stop working after they had children than after they got married. This was particularly the case for younger women who had been brought up in the UK. Women who had careers before they married were usually keen to continue them afterwards, although most women without children at the time of the interview said that they wanted to take a break from work when they had children, and imagined that they would stay at home to look after them. Those who had been actively engaged in the labour market before having children were likely to want to return to it at some point after having children – although sometimes not until their children were a little older. A number of women felt that they would not want to return to the labour market until their children were at school, while some felt that their children would probably be older than this. There was most resistance to combine work and family amongst those who had never worked or had rarely worked, those with lower levels of qualifications, those whose English language skills were less proficient, and those who were older and had never been engaged in formal education or work in the UK.

Childcare

Most women said that they would prefer to look after their own children, rather than rely on family or others. Where this was not possible, informal childcare, from close or extended family, was usually seen as preferential to formal childcare arrangements. A few women used formal childcare, and some of the younger women without children felt that they might consider this in the future. They highlighted the educational and socialisation benefits of children attending nurseries. In general, nurseries were preferred over childminders, as they were seen as safer and environments where there were only female child carers was viewed to be important by some. Culturally specific childcare could be very important in increasing the appeal of formal childcare options to Pakistani and Bangladeshi women, who want to feel confident that their children will be in safe environments with people who can be trusted to uphold their own religious and cultural values and behaviours.

Other barriers to employment

Other barriers to employment were seen to be a lack of English language, and poor health amongst some of the older women. Discrimination was spoken about by some women, with some saying they felt they may have experienced this, and others saying they had avoided applying for work in environments where they felt it might be encountered. Discrimination was usually seen as being subtle, for example, some work environments and some careers would be difficult or unpleasant to work in as a Pakistani or Bangladeshi woman as a result of being male dominated or overwhelmingly white. Private sector organisations were seen by some as being more difficult organisations in which to work and obtain a work-life balance, while others felt that careers requiring people, particularly women, to look a certain way and present a particular image, such as fashion journalism, were particularly difficult to enter as an Asian woman.

Work-enabling factors

The importance of having flexibility at work was highlighted by a number of women. Those who worked for employers who allowed them some flexibility, particularly around their hours worked, said that this had enabled them to balance their work with other areas of their life, particularly family. Flexibility at work was of prime importance for women once they had children. Many had chosen their careers or their employers specifically for this purpose. Part-time work options were also felt to be critical, as some women said they would not work at all if they were not able to work part-time while their children were at school, so that they were free to pick them up at the end of the school day. While not all women were determined that they would only work part-time once they had children, many women felt that any work they did would need to be flexible enough to fit around their family. Those who had worked full-time when their children were very small had often done so very reluctantly and out of dire financial necessity. They usually said they deeply regretted having had to do this. In general, once children were a little older, women became more willing to work to bring in additional income to raise their family's standard of living. For some, location of a job was also important. The extent to which family was a work-enabling factor varied. For some it was a source of support and childcare, although for those who had relatives with more traditional views, there had been, or were, barriers to overcome in terms of their family expectations for them.

Self-employment

Only a small number of women had experience of self-employment; this was usually interpreting and translation work. Women reported that their husbands and other men in their families had owned a range of businesses including shops and restaurants. The key benefits of self-employment was seen to be its flexibility, enabling women to juggle their work around their family responsibilities.

5.2 Policy implications

The chapter on attitudes towards the family and home provides important background information on the values, views and motivations of these Pakistani and Bangladeshi women. The centrality of the family and home, and the importance placed on the role of women as mothers gives a context for the following chapter on education and experiences of, and attitudes towards, employment. It appeared that some considerable changes had occurred naturally within one generation, but that future policy could be targeted to assist women from these communities. The key policy implications arising from these chapters of the report are outlined as follows:

- education is key;
- assisting women who have had children to return to work;
- ensuring flexible employment;

- providing appropriate childcare;
- engaging the hardest to reach groups.

5.2.1 Education is key

The importance of education in raising women's aspirations and expectations in both the home and in the labour market should be recognised.

The benefits of women obtaining a good education and obtaining qualifications were well recognised by women with and without qualifications themselves. Education was valued for its own sake, to enable women to be good role models for their own children, and to give women choices in the labour market. It was also an important factor in women's engagement with the labour market, with women with degree level qualifications and above usually being in employment, and planning to work throughout their lives, although invariably with a break from work while their children were young. Hence, education can be seen as an important driver for work, making employment a more natural outcome for women, and enabling them to get better jobs than would otherwise be the case. Having qualifications and being employed also appeared to promote greater equality in the home. Those with qualifications and who were working reported that the household tasks were shared more equally between themselves and their husbands.

5.2.2 Assisting women who have had children to return to the labour market

Ways to keep contact with, or re-engage, women returners from these communities need to be found.

Marriage and children were seen as a certainty by almost all women who took part in the study. In addition, most wanted to take a break from work while their children were young, typically refraining from work until the youngest was at least of school age. Being able to be there for their children was seen as one of the most important aspects in women's lives; however, those who had been employed prior to starting a family, or those who were working but planned to take time out when they had children, felt that they would like to return to work once their children were a little older. It would seem to be important to provide appropriate development opportunities and suitable childcare for women with children nearing school age, ensuring that they are work-ready by the time their children are settled at school. This would seem particularly critical with regard to women returners who have been out of the labour market for a number of years but who, before taking time out to have a family, had significant skills and experience in paid employment. There may be increasing numbers of such women in the Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities in coming years. In order to assist women returners, ways to keep them engaged and to prevent their confidence and their

skills diminishing while they are not working, need to be found. For example, this could be through community or voluntary work opportunities, generic or tailored adult education courses, or mentoring schemes.

5.2.3 Ensuring flexible employment

Ensuring flexible employment opportunities that are sensitive to constraints will assist Pakistani and Bangladeshi women to combine work and family.

Flexible employment and part-time work were highlighted as key in enabling women to combine giving their families the time and attention they felt was appropriate, with employment. Women rarely prioritised work over their family, and hence, if flexible employment was not available then working would often not be deemed possible by women with children. In terms of the need to work to lift children out of poverty, there is an issue of relative and different cultural values operating, which means that the gap in terms of labour market participation by women across different ethnic groups may never be fully closed. The material 'luxuries' (which could be afforded as a result of a second income from women with children returning to work) were viewed by many of these women as less important than a mother being able to be there for her children when they needed her, for example, to be available to pick children up from school every day, or look after them when they were ill. Many Pakistani and Bangladeshi women, regardless of their qualifications and prior career attainment, would not work outside the home once they had children if their employment was not flexible enough for them to also attend to their families, even if this meant that money would be tight. Hence, it is of key importance to ensure that opportunities for flexible employment are available, if Pakistani and Bangladeshi women with children are to freely choose to work.

5.2.4 Providing appropriate childcare

Ensuring the provision of culturally sensitive childcare, organised in a way that is deemed appropriate by mothers from these communities, will provide women with more choice.

Women usually felt that caring for their own children, or using informal childcare was preferential to using nurseries and childminders. They wanted their children to be cared for by people who would uphold their own cultural values and beliefs. This seemed to go beyond the need to provide simple solutions, for example, appropriate food and places to pray, to encompass promoting a wide range of beliefs, behaviours and practices which women felt were intrinsic to their culture and way of living, and should be taught to their children as a matter of course, including their children learning both the English language and their own mother tongue language, and learning about their religion.

Younger women without children were sometimes aware of the socialisation and developmental benefits of formal childcare. There may be considerable scope for providing and promoting a wider choice in terms of childcare for women than is currently available, which would provide women with children with culturally viable choices around childcare to support them if they chose to go back to work. In this way, one of the biggest barriers to employment could start to be actively addressed in a way appropriate to these communities. Perhaps the powerful extended family networks which often exist in the Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities in the UK could be utilised to this end. If women with children who wished to stay with them while they were young were to become involved as formal carers of other children from the same communities, perhaps within extended family networks, this could potentially address two related issues. Firstly, it would provide employment for women who could otherwise find it difficult to obtain work to fit around their own families. Secondly, it would provide an assurance to mothers that their children would be looked after by women who shared, and could actively promote, their own practices, values and beliefs.

5.2.5 Engaging the hardest to reach groups

Offer long-term unemployed or economically inactive women targeted intervention and support in a non-threatening environment within their own community.

Older women and first generation women who have not worked in the UK, particularly those with limited English language and no or few qualifications, are unlikely to be assisted by the policy suggestions above. These hardest to reach groups of Pakistani and Bangladeshi women will need a longer-term, targeted intervention offering support and opportunities to develop their skills and confidence in an environment with which they are comfortable. It may be difficult to engage those who have never been active in the labour market and are now in their 40s and 50s, although in our research there were some examples of this happening through community groups, where women moved from attending classes to helping to teach them. Community-based learning, provided in centres specifically for women, may be one of the most appropriate ways to move these women towards being job-ready.

Appendix A

Discussion guide

Interview instructions

- Read transcript from interview one before go, summarise information.
- Take with you: dictaphone, timeline, set of stickers for timeline, daily routine chart, stickers for daily routine, summary of information from interview one, fliers for snowballing, incentive form and incentive.
- Guide is made up of heading and prompts for interviewers so that you can phrase questions yourselves as appropriate. There are further instructions in the sections on timeline and daily routine. Please keep these once completed for analysis later.
- The sections after the timeline are to follow up information from the timeline to get more detail. Not all suggested follow-up questions will be relevant to everyone – use judgement of which to ask.
- Introducing the research to the respondent: for DWP, who IES are, research aims (change in circumstances from interview one, attitudes to work and family), confidentiality, don't have to answer questions, hour-long, taping, incentive.

Update from last interview (original sample only)

Refer to summary from last interview:

- Changes in their circumstances (regarding marriage, children, education, employment, benefits) since the first interview.
- Who lives in household now? (husband, children, parents, parents-in-law, other relatives).

Background information (new sample only)

- Ethnicity.
- Migration – whether born in UK, why they/parents/grandparents came to this country, what part of Pakistan/Bangladesh family from originally?
- Language – languages spoken, what spoken at home, any ESOL done.
- Age.
- Area of city live in, whether house or rented, who owns if owned.
- Who lives in household (husband, children, parents, parents-in-law, other relatives).
- Benefit history and any periods on New Deal.
- Qualifications.
- Details of jobs done before (type, hours worked, wages, how long for).
- Current situation – on benefits, in education, in employment.

Timeline

Please give respondents timeline and a set of stickers. Ask them to stick the stickers on the timeline to show what has happened to them up to their current age. Use blank stickers for them to add events that were important.

- Discuss with them what happened and why, in what order, exactly how old they were.
- Ask them what they expected to happen in the future when they were aged 15. Ask when they expected things that have happened to them already (stickers used) to happen, as well as when they expected things that have not happened to them yet (stickers not used) to happen. Ask why they had these expectations and what influenced them – friends, family, other influences. Discuss with them what they did and did not expect to happen and why.
- Ask them what their family expected/expects to happen to them. Discuss whether family expectations are changing, and how they differ from their own expectations.
- Discuss with them any differences or similarities between what actually happened, what they expected to happen and what their parents expected to happen. Were there barriers to doing what they wanted?

Marriage and having children

Go back to explore issues raised in the timeline around marriage and having children. Differences in what happened, their own expectations, their families' expectations.

- If married, how did they meet their husband?
- If married, how old is their husband?
- Probe for what they enjoy/are looking forward to about marriage.
- Probe for what if anything they find/think they will find difficult about marriage.
- Did they always assume they would get married?
- Did they always assume they would have children?
- Is the number of children that it is normal to have changing?
- Who do they feel is responsible for earning money within a marriage? Both?
- Who is responsible for home and family within a marriage? Both?
- Who is the main breadwinner in the relationship? Who earns the most?
- Who is the most qualified?
- Have their own views towards marriage and children changed? Why/in what way?
- Are views towards marriage and children changing amongst the younger generation? Why/in what way?
- Are the views of the wider community towards marriage and children (age started family and number of children) changing? Why/in what way?

Caring for children and other family members

We want to explore attitudes around caring for children and caring for adults.

Caring for adults

- Do they have caring responsibilities for adults? (Details of who adults are, whether in their household, how much caring they do, if shared with other family members.)
- Are they expected by their family to look after extended family?

Caring for children

- Who looked after them when they were children?
- What do they think makes a good parent? (Being there for children full-time? Helping with homework? etc.)

- Who looks/looked after their children? (Themselves, family who live in the household, family outside the household, friends, formal childcare.)
- If not had children yet, who do they want to look after their children? (Family who live in the household, family outside the household, friends, formal childcare.)
- Is it expected that older women in family will help them care for their children? Do they want that? Are older women available on regular basis?
- Are they expected by their family to care for their children?
- How are domestic tasks shared between members of (extended) family?
- Are older people's views of the role of younger women changing? In what ways?
- Is it acceptable/possible to combine caring for children/other family members with paid work? Have they done so? Would they want to? Is it expected?
- Are expectations of their family and community about their family responsibilities changing?

Childcare

- Would they be happy to use formal childcare? (nurseries, childminder etc.)
- What would they want from formal childcare? (cultural environment – same language/cultural practices/food, quality of care.)
- Do they have information on childcare that is available locally?
- What do they think of childcare that is available locally? Is it suitable?

Employment

Experience of employment

- Details of any jobs doing now (type, hours worked, wages, how long for.)
- Are they doing any paid employment at home? (eg mail order, greeting cards.)
- If employed/been employed before, what influenced their decision to get a job?
- What are the barriers to getting a job?
- Do the barriers women face differ from those faced by Pakistani/Bangladeshi men?
- Are they interested in learning English or undertaking training?
- What jobs do they think are available locally and across the city?
- Do they think they may be discriminated against in terms of employment?
- Have they ever been discriminated against in terms of employment?

- Details of jobs of other household members.
- Do extended periods in Pakistan/Bangladesh make it difficult for them to maintain paid work?

Attitudes to paid employment

We want to know what influences their attitude to paid employment.

- How did any post-16 education influence their attitude to paid employment?
- How did marriage influence their attitude to paid employment?
- How did having first child influence their attitude to paid employment?
- How did having subsequent children influence their attitude to paid employment?
- Do they see the role of wife and mother as having more/less/the same importance as employment?
- What (if anything) is positive about paid employment? (eg identity/independence/self-esteem/earnings.)
- What (if anything) is negative about paid employment?
- What are their husband's views on whether they should have a paid job?
- What are their parents' views on whether they should have a paid job?
- What are their parents-in-law's views on whether they should have a paid job?
- What are their family's views on whether they should do voluntary work?
- To what extent can they negotiate if their own views on whether they want a job are different to the views of their husband and family?
- Have they negotiated before? What were the circumstances? What happened?
- Are older people's views of whether younger women should do paid work changing?

Career choices/aspirations

We want to know what types of jobs they would like to work in.

- If not currently in employment, do they want to be in paid employment? Why?
- Did they want to work when they were younger?
- When would they like to move into paid employment? (eg when children older.)
- What kinds of jobs, if any did/do they want to do?

- What makes these jobs attractive?
- Do they know how to get into these jobs? (What qualifications they would need? etc.)
- Do/did they have female family members who have jobs? (details)
- Does/did this influence their own desire to work?
- What women do they admire/aspire to be either that they know or don't know? (role models)
- What are their aspirations for their (female) children? Same or different to the role they personally have taken?

Working in family/their own businesses

We want to know whether women are working in a family business and what their attitudes are towards running their own business.

- Does anyone in the family run their own business? (Husband, parents, parents-in-law, other.)
- Do they personally ever help out in the family business?
 - When and why?
 - How often?
 - What hours?
 - Are they paid? (In cash or kind?)
 - Who owns the business?
 - Do they think of themselves as self-employed?
- Are they working in their own business? (Probe for activities such as cooking in own home and selling food to shops/restaurants.)
 - When did they start own business, why and how?
 - Do they think of themselves as self-employed?
 - Do children in family help in the business? (If so how often? Are they paid?)
- Have they ever considered starting their own business?
 - Why?
 - Where? (Home?)
 - What type of business?
 - How will they finance it? Concerns about financial risk?
 - Do they know where they can get business advice/support from?

Daily routines

Please give respondent daily routine card and 24 stickers (1 sticker = 1 hour). Get them to put stickers on the card until they have used 24 stickers to represent what they spend their hours in a typical 24 hours doing. Start by asking what time they get up, how long before that they were asleep, and then work through the day hour by hour. Then:

- How do they feel about their daily routine? Would they like to be doing more or less of some things?
- How does that differ from what their mother/mother-in-law's daily routines were like when they were the age the respondent is now?
- How do they think their daughter's daily routine will be different when they are the age the respondent is now? What are their aspirations for their daughters in terms of marriage/education/employment?

Helping us with this research

- Any questions/anything they want to add?
- Can they suggest other women that might like to take part in the research? Give them fliers.
- Do they know of community groups or organisations that we might be able to use to recruit women to take part?
- Would they be willing to be recontacted for any future waves of this research that might take place?
- How research will be used (will send findings).
- Thank and pay incentive.

Appendix B

Timeline

Timeline for ID No:

0-14 years	15-17 years	18-19 years	20-22 years	23-25 years	26-29 years

Timeline for ID No: Continued

30-34 years						
35-39 years						
40-49 years						
50-59 years						
60-69 years						
70+ years						

Appendix C

Activity labels

First arrive in UK	Time in Pakistan	Time in Bangladesh
Return to UK	Leave school	Start college
Leave college	Go to university	Leave university
Meet husband	Marriage	Divorced/separated
Husband died	Married again	First born child
Another child born	Another child born	Another child born
Another child born	Own first home	Move house
Get first job	Stop job after having children	Return to job after having children
Set up own business	Have grandchildren	Retire

Appendix D

Daily routine

Daily routine for ID No:

Activity	Number of hours spent
<i>Sleeping/in bed</i>	
<i>Getting up/getting ready for bed</i>	
<i>Cooking/eating</i>	
<i>Cleaning/washing clothes</i>	
<i>Looking after children</i>	
<i>Looking after adults</i>	
<i>Shopping</i>	
<i>Working in family business</i>	
<i>Doing a job</i>	
<i>Travelling</i>	
<i>Leisure, ie watching TV, reading etc.</i>	
<i>Studying/at College/University</i>	
<i>Socialising</i>	

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